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26. *Adventures in New Mexico.*

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

ADVENTURES IN MEXICO

AND

THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

By GEORGE F. RUXTON, Esq.,
MEMBER OF THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY, THE ETHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY,
ETC. ETC.

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PREFACE.

Some apology, I am aware, is necessary for offering so meagre an account of Mexico as that which is set before the reader in the following pages. In justice to myself, however, I may state that all the notes and memoranda of the country I passed through, as well as several valuable and interesting documents and MSS. connected with the history of Northern Mexico and its Indian tribes, which I had collected, were unfortunately destroyed (with the exception of my rough note-book) in passing the Pawnee Fork of the river Arkansa, as I have mentioned in the body of this narrative; and this loss has left me no alternative but to give a brief outline of my journey, which, bare as it may be, I prefer to lay before the reader in its present shape, rather than draw at hazard from the treacherous note-book of memory, or the less reliable source of a fertile imagination.

It is hardly necessary to explain the cause of my visiting Mexico at such an unsettled period; and I fear that circumstances will prevent my gratifying the curiosity of the reader, should he feel any on that point.

This little work is merely what its title professes it to be, "The Rough Notes of a Journey through Mexico, and a Winter spent amongst the wild scenes and wilder characters of the Rocky Mountains," and has no higher aim than to give an idea of the difficulties and hardships a traveller may anticipate, should he venture to pass through it and mix with its semi-barbarous and uncouth people, and to draw a faint picture of the lives of those hardy pioneers of civilisation whose lot is cast upon the boundless prairies and rugged mountains of the Far West.

With a solitary exception I have avoided touching upon American subjects; not only because much abler pens than mine have done that country and people more or less justice or injustice, and I wish to attempt to describe nothing that other English travellers have written upon before, and to give a rough sketch of a very *rough* journey through comparatively new ground—but, more than all, for the reason that I have, on this and previous visits to the United States, met with such genuine kindness and unbounded hospitality from all classes of the American people, both the richest and the poorest, that I have not the heart to say one harsh word of them or theirs, even if I could or would.

Faults the Americans have—and who have not? But they are, I maintain, failings of the head and not the heart, which nowhere beats warmer, or in a more genuine spirit of kindness and affection, than in the bosom of a citizen of the United States.

Would that I could say as much of the sister people. From south to north I traversed the whole of the Republic of Mexico, a distance of nearly two thousand miles, and was thrown amongst the people of every rank, class, and station; and I regret to have to say that I cannot remember to have observed one single commendable trait in the character of the Mexican; always excepting from this sweeping clause the women of the country, who, for kindness of heart and many sterling qualities, are an ornament to their sex, and to any nation.

If the Mexican possess one single virtue, as I hope he does, he must keep it so closely hidden in some secret fold of his *sarape* as to have escaped my humble sight, although I travelled through his country with eyes wide open, and for conviction ripe and ready. I trust, for his sake, that he will speedily withdraw from the bushel the solitary light of this concealed virtue, lest before long it be absorbed in the more potent flame which the Anglo-Saxon seems just now disposed to shed over benighted Mexico.

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ADVENTURES IN MEXICO

AND

THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

CHAPTER I.

Under Weigh—Fellow-Passengers—Amusements on Board—Land in sight—Madeira—Appearance of Island—Funchalese Jockeys—Straw Hats and Canary-Birds—A Ride up the Mountain—Again on Board—Land, ho!—Barbadoes—Betsy Austin—Pepper-pot—Importunate Negroes.

On the 2nd of July, at 1 P.M., the royal mail-packet steamed out of Southampton Water. For three hours we had been in the usual state of confusion attending the sailing of a packet on a long voyage. Being the first on board, and having no friends with long faces and handkerchiefs to their eyes to distract my attention, I had leisure to look about me, and survey the different passengers as they came on board, in every stage of delight and despair. Some there were who possibly had set their feet for the last time on their native shore, and had in perspective a tropical futurity, with sugar-hogsheads, cocoa-nuts, and vomito in the distance. Others again were homeward bound, delighted to turn their backs on the suicidal mists of the isle of vapours, and revelling in anticipated enjoyment of the fiery paradise beyond the sea. Red and swollen eyes, however, were in a decided majority; and as the steam hissed and snorted, so did faces become more elongated, and the corners of mouths take a downward angle.

At length the ominous bell gave notice that the moment of parting had arrived. Fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, and lovers with quivering lip, for the last time embraced; the tender cast off her hawser, and the huge steamer was speeding on her way. And now solitary figures with swollen eyes leaned over the taffrail, gazing intently towards the land, and at the little speck dancing on the waves, which was bearing so quickly away loved objects, seen by many of them for the last time.

Our passengers comprised a motley group: Creoles of the West India islands and the main, Spaniards of Havana, French of Martinique and Gaudaloupe, Danes of St. Thomas, Dutch of Curaçoa, Portuguese of Madeira, Jamaica Jews, merchants of Costa Rica, military officers, and emigrating Yorkshire farmers, were amongst the various items of the human freight.

However, forty-eight hours' shaking together amalgamated the mass; and when that number of hours and a southerly course had carried us into a smooth sea and heavenly climate, all sorrows were for the time forgotten. A Jamaica Jew had taken up a position on the cabin skylight, where, with a pack of cards and a pile of gold before him, he every day, and all day long, officiated as dueño of a monté-table; a little Rabbi, throwing aside his sacerdotal cares, and shining in glossy black, superintending the receipts and disbursements of the bank. The provideur, who by the way was the life of the ship, was already chalking on the deck a marine billiard-table; and under his direction and tuition, English and French, Spaniards and Dutch, were soon engaged in momentous matches, on which depended many a bottle of iced champagne.

These amusements, combined with a vast deal of eating, drinking, and smoking, fortunately preserved us in good humour for six days; when, just as shovel-board had lost its charms, champagne its flavour, and the monté Israelite his customers, the welcome cry of "Land, ho!" at midnight on the 12th, turned out all hands on deck; and there, looming in the hazy distance on our starboard bow, lay Puerto Santo, part and parcel of "soft" Madeira.

When I rose the next morning we were standing into Funchal Roads, and shortly after came to anchor within three-quarters of a mile of the shore and opposite the town of Funchal. At this distance the island, rising to a great elevation from the water's edge, with the town, washed by the Atlantic, at its base, and innumerable white houses, with here and there a convent's spires, dotted up the sides, resembles a scene of a gigantic panorama, with every object so clearly displayed to the eye, and fore and back ground of deep-blue sky and azure sea.

On landing in one of the country boats, as soon as the keel had touched the beach, a cavalcade of horsemen, mounted on handsome active ponies, charged to the very water's edge, and, nearly trampling us in their furious onslaught, reined up suddenly, bringing their steeds on their haunches. Our first thought was instant flight; but, finding their object was pacific, we learned that this Arab-like proceeding was for the purpose of displaying the merits of their cattle, and to tempt us to engage in an equestrian expedition up the mountain. Selecting three promising-looking animals, and preceded by their funnel-capped proprietors as guides, we proceeded to the town.

Funchal in no degree differs from any sea or river side town in Portugal. The Funchalese are Portuguese in form and feature; the women, if possible, more ordinary, and the beggars more importunate and persevering. The beach is covered with plank sleds, to which are yoked most comical little oxen no larger than donkeys. In these sleds the hogsheads of wine are conveyed to the boats, as they are better adapted to the rough shingle than wheeled conveyances. To a stranger the trade of the town appears to be monopolised by vendors of straw hats and canary-birds. These articles of merchandise are thrust into one's face at every step. *Sombreros* are pounded upon your head; showers of canaries and goldfinches, with strings attached to their legs, are fired like rockets into your face; and the stunning roar of the salesmen deafen the ear.

Ascending the precipitous *ruas*, we soon reached the suburbs, our guides holding on by the tails of the horses to facilitate their ascent. Still mounting, we pass where vines are trellised over the road; sweet-smelling geraniums, heliotrope, and fuschias overhang the garden-walls on each side; whilst, in the beautiful little gardens which everywhere meet the eye, the graceful banana, the orange-tree and waving maize, the tropical aloe and homely oak, form the most pleasing contrasts and enchant the sight. Winding still up the mountain-side, the interminable stone-paved suburb is passed; but even whilst toiling over the uneven slippery pavement, and sitting in an almost vertical saddle, hanging on to the mane like grim death, it is impossible even to whisper an imprecation, everything around is so soft and pleasing; and, *malgré lui*, one (even if he be an Englishman) has not the heart to growl or complain.

Here the vivid colourings of a tropical scene blend in harmony with the sober tints of a more temperate landscape. By the orange and leaf-spreading banana grow the oak and apple; the cactus and the daisy bloom together; the luscious pine and humble potato yield their fruit; and, side by side with the golden-coloured canary, the robin redbreast warbles his sweet and well-known song.

The sides of the mountain are clothed with vines, and numerous streamlets trickle along the roadside, cooling the air with their refreshing murmurs; whilst a mountain torrent here and there forces its impetuous way. The paths which wind along the mountain overhang precipices lined with foliage, and water everywhere glitters through the verdure and relieves the eye. In the valleys are seen delicious nooks, green and cool, shadowed by the lofty rocks, with picturesque cottages and smiling gardens, and scenes of such quiet beauty as one never tires to gaze upon. Turning in your saddle, you see the town of Funchal at your feet, reflected in the smooth and glittering sea. The vessels in the roads appear no larger than fishing-boats; and the huge steamer, lying lazily at her anchor, will be the victim of a malediction, that it is so soon to bear you away from this sweet island.

The sun too is not the fireball of the tropics, or even the heat-engendering luminary we have left behind us, but shines faintly bright through a dim soft mist; and while sweet-smelling flowers dispense their odours around, and the notes of song-birds are heard on every side, the air breathes soft and soothingly.

With no little regret I turned my horse's head down the mountain-side, after several hours' ramble in this elysian spot; and not even a glass of the Messrs. Gordon's Tinta or Malvozia, of a choice vintage, could reconcile me to the idea of again entering the snorting prison-house which puffed impatiently in the roads.

On leaving Madeira we had thirteen days of most monotonous steaming, during which a most universal *ennui* prevailed on board, relieved occasionally by the outbreakings of some wooer of the fickle goddess, whose winnings or losings had been more than usually great, and consequently occasioned a greater or less amount of self-gratulation or excitement. When every mortal means of amusement was supposed to have been exhausted, it was providentially discovered that the Rabbi was in the habit of slaying with his own hand, and according to the strict letter of the Mosaic law, the ducks, fowls, and sheep which he desired to devour.

The day after the discovery the butcher was seen to approach the Rabbi with some mysterious communication, who immediately tucked up his sleeves, took a knife which was handed to him by the butcher, and accompanied that functionary to the hen-coops.

In an instant the quarter-deck was deserted; every passenger stealthily took up a position where he could witness the mysterious catastrophe. The Rabbi, with upturned wristbands, carefully kneaded the breasts of several fowls which were offered to his knife by the butcher, and at length, selecting one whose condition was undeniable, casting up his eyes and invoking Moses to give him the requisite nerve, he administered the mystic stab, and instantly retreated. As a reward for the excitement he had caused, I noticed that at dinner that day the Rabbi received most friendly offers of ham and roast pork.

On the thirteenth morning after leaving Madeira the low regular outline of Barbadoes was visible on the horizon. This island exhibits less tropical scenery than any other in the West Indies, being less mountainous, and the plains and hills cultivated in every part, and consequently the bush is cleared off to make way for agricultural improvements. It is not, however, the less beautiful on this account; and everywhere the snug-looking houses of the planters, with mills and sugar-houses, and all the appliances of thriving plantations, were seen as we hugged the shore.

On landing I found myself, very fortunately and unexpectedly, amongst many old friends, whose hospitality I enjoyed during my stay at the island.

Amongst the celebrated of Barbadoes whom I deemed it my duty to visit, was the renowned Betsy Austin, once (in the days when the late King William was a jolly mid) the pride of the

'Badian dignity balls, but now in "the sear and yellow leaf," fat as a turtle, and always very drunk. I found the ancient beauty sitting in the verandah of her house, surrounded by a dozen sable and yellow handmaidens, some of them very pretty girls, who were engaged in pickling and preserving West India fruits. She insisted on my joining her in a sangaree, which was prepared in a tumbler holding about half a gallon; and, shaking my hand at parting, being crying drunk, slobbered out a "Gar bless you sar! hab notin to do wid Car'line Lee;" which Caroline Lee is own sister to Betsy, but guilty of keeping an opposition house, and hence the warning.

I found nothing striking in Barbadoes but the sun, which is a perpetual furnace, and the pepper-pot—a dish to the mysteries of which I was initiated here for the first time. It is a delicious compound of flesh, fish, and fowl, piqué with all the hot peppers and condiments the island produces, and mystified in a rich black sauce. The flavour of this wonderful dish is impossible to be described. Imagine a mass of cockroaches stewed in pitch, and a faint idea may be had of the appearance and smell of the savoury compound.

Of Bridgetown, the capital, the less said the better. It is infested with a most rascally and impudent race of negroes, who almost resort to violence to wrench unwilling pistareens from the stranger's pocket. Just before my arrival half the town had most providentially been destroyed by fire, so that, if rebuilt, hopes are entertained of a more respectable-looking place being erected.

CHAPTER II.

Grenada — San Domingo — Jacmel — Jamaica — Kingston — Killbucra — Cuba—Isle of Pines—Havana—Its Harbour—Appearance of the Town —*Paseo* Tacon—Havaneras—Eyes and Fans—The Theatre—Once more under Weigh—A Squall—Brought to—Military Despotism—A Capture —Speak a Steamer—Santa Anna—Arrive at Vera Cruz.

THE next island touched at was Grenada, one of the most picturesque of the Antilles. The little harbour is completely landlocked, and, as it were, scooped out of the side of the mountain, which rises from the water's edge. An old green fort, perched upon a crag, commands the anchorage, and the little town, interspersed with palm-trees and aloes, appears to be crawling up the mountain. Here we remained but a few hours, and steered thence to San Domingo, one of the largest of the group. Coasting along, it presented a bold imposing outline of rugged mountains covered with forests, and but little appearance of cultivation. Staying but a few hours at Jacmel, to receive and deliver mails, we soon came in sight of Jamaica, with its fine bold scenery of mountain and valley; and threading the intricate and dangerous reefs, and passing the forts and batteries of Port Royal, we anchored about noon off Kingston, the chief town of the island.

Here we left the greater part of our fellow-passengers, including the card-playing Jew and the Rabbi. The former left the steamer minus several hundred pounds by his monté speculation, the greater part of which had been won by two boys from Birmingham, who were on their way to Havana to set up a cooperage. Elated with their (to them) enormous gains, they, in honour of the occasion, sacrificed too freely to the rosy god, the consequence of which was that in a few weeks both were carried off by the relentless vomito.

A couple of days spent amongst the killbucra* and sopilotes* of Uppark rendered my regret at leaving Jamaica anything but poignant; and taking leave of the dusty dirty town of Kingston, with its ruinous houses and miserable population, in a few days we were coasting along the south side of Cuba, passing Cape Antonio and the Isle of Pines, once famous, or rather infamous, as the resort of pirates, who infested these seas until within a few years, and still the rendezvous of equally nefarious slavers. La Havana—the Haven—is one of the finest harbours in the world, and capable of holding a thousand vessels. It is completely land-locked, and the entrance so narrow that vessels must pass within musket-shot of the "Morro," whose frowning batteries look down on the very decks. Besides the Morro, the formidable batteries of the Principe and La Cabaña show their teeth on each side, and numerous detached works crown every eminence.

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* A yellow flower, which is said to be more abundant during sickly seasons. The sopilote is the turkey-buzzard.

The Spaniards may well be jealous of Cuba, which, with their usual *fanfaron* (just, however, in this case), they style "La joya mas brillante en la corona de España," the most brilliant jewel in the crown of Spain. This, the last of their once magnificent dependencies, they may well guard with watchful eye; for not only do the colonists most cordially detest the mother country, and only wait an opportunity to throw off the yoke, but already an unscrupulous and powerful neighbour "of the north" casts a longing eye towards this rich and beautiful island.

The cruel dissensions and bloody revolutions which have so long convulsed unfortunate Spain have seldom extended their influences to this remote colony. Cuba, content in her riches and prosperity, has looked calmly on, indifferent to the throes which have agonized the maternal frame. Her boastful sobriquet, "Siempre fiel isla de Cuba"—the ever-faithful island of Cuba—has thus been cheaply earned, and passively retained by the ironical Havaneros, who will assuredly one day pluck out from the Spanish crown this "fine jewel," or suffer it to be transferred to a foreign bonnet.

The harbour has been so often described that it is needless to dilate upon its beauties. In one corner is a rank mangrove swamp which exhales a fatal miasma, and which, wafted by the land-breeze over the town and shipping, is one great cause of the deplorable mortality which occurs here in the sickly season. Havana is quite a Spanish town, and reminded me of Cadiz more than any other. It is, however, cleaner and better regulated, with a very efficient police. The streets are narrow, as they ought to be in hot countries, and towards the evening thronged with volantes, a light spider-like carriage peculiar to Cuba, freighted with black-eyed beauties on their way to the paseo, shopping, or to Dominica's, the celebrated *neveria* or ice-shop, where they very properly pull up "a refrescar un tantito" —to cool the courage—before "showing" on the excitable paseo.

From seven to ten the *Paseo Tacon* is thronged, and a stranger had better pause before he runs the gauntlet of such batteries of eyes and fans, as he never before, in his northern philosophy, thought or dreamed of. The ladies dress in white, with their beautiful hair unsacrificed by bonnet, and, if ornamented, by a simple white or red rose, *à la moda Andaluza.* However perfect may be their figures, you see them not. One's gaze is concentrated in their large lustrous eyes, which, when you get within their reach, swallow you up as the sun swallows a comet when he is rash enough to approach too near, throwing you out again, a burnt-up cinder, to be resuscitated and reburned by the next eyes which pass. The Havaneras certainly surpass the Spaniards in the beauty of their eyes, if that be possible.

With their eyes and abanicos (fans) the Havaneras have no need of tongues; which, however, they can use on emergencies. Whereas every pretty woman can in some degree "make the eyes speak," no other than a Spanish beauty can use a fan. This is to them the "idioma de amor," the language of love. Assisted by the eye it is eloquence itself, and in the hands of a coquette, like a gun in the hands of a careless boy, is a most dangerous weapon. To *see* this language spoken in perfection, visit the theatre Tacon, which by the way is the prettiest theatre in the world. Here, between the acts, nothing is heard but the clicking of fans, whilst cross fires of lightning-glances pierce one through and through. The front of the boxes in the Tacon is of light open work, through which the white dresses of the ladies are seen, and which has a very pretty effect. Unlike the boxes of our opera, which invidiously conceal all but the beauties "above the zone," here the whole figure, simply draped in white, is fully displayed. Foreigners say that an Englishwoman should never be seen but in an opera-box; and the Spaniards affirm that, whereas an "Englishwoman should be seen at a window, and a Frenchwoman promenading, the gods have vouchsafed that a Spaniard may be looked at everywhere:" "La Ynglesa en la ventana, la Francesca paseandose, la Española, por onde se quiere."

Three miles from Havana is *El Cerro,* where the wealthy merchants have their country seats, and resort with their families during the sickly season. The fronts of these houses are completely open, save by light bars, so that at night, when lighted up, the whole interior is perfectly displayed. Night is the fashionable time for visiting; and through this open birdcage-work may be seen a formal row of males *in front* of the ladies, for here, in this excitable climate, it is deemed imprudent to bring into actual contact such substances as flint and steel, or fire and tow.

After four days' stay in Havana, I again embarked on board the steamer, and in such a storm of thunder and rain as I shall never forget. I engaged a shore-boat, manned by two mulattos, and before we could reach the steamer the hurricane broke upon us. The lightning appeared actually to rain down, the flashes being incessant, whilst the rain descended with such violence as nearly to fill and swamp the boat. The boatmen swore and cursed, and crouched under the thwarts; the sail and mast were blown clean away; and for more than an hour we were unable to face the storm. At length, taking advantage of a lull, we managed to reach the vessel, and after a vexatious delay of several hours got under weigh. On passing the Morro, we were hailed and ordered to bring to, whilst, at the same moment, a boat, with a corporal and three men, put off from the castle, and boarded us. We had on board a great number of passengers on their way to Mexico, and many were probably leaving Cuba without the necessary passport, so that, on the arrival of the boat, many olive-coloured gentlemen with moustaches dived suddenly below, being seized with a sudden desire to explore the hold and other cavernous portions of the ship. However, in a few minutes all the passengers were mustered on deck by the captain, and heir names called. As one unlucky Spaniard answered to his name, the corporal stepped up to him, laying his finger on his shoulder, with "En el nombre del gobernador," in the name of the governor. "A su disposicion, amigo"—at your service, friend—answered the captured one, and, quietly lighting his cigar, descended into the guard-boat with his trunk, *en route* to the dungeons of the Morro. "Viva!" exclaimed the Spaniards: "maldito sea el déspota," curse the despot; and, breathing freely, relighted their puros, and indulged in a little abuse of their colonial government.

The day after our departure from Havana we overtook a small steamer under the British flag, which was pronounced to be the "Arab," having on board the ex-President of Mexico, General Santa Anna. As she signalled to speak, we bore down upon her, and, running alongside, her captain hailed to know if we would take on board four passengers; which was declined, our skipper not wishing to compromise himself with the American blockading squadron at Vera Cruz, by carrying Mexican officers. We had a good view of Santa Anna, and his pretty young wife, who, on hearing our decision, stamped her little foot on the deck, and turned poutingly to some of her suite. It seemed that the "Arab" had disabled her machinery, and was making such slow progress that Santa Anna was desirous of continuing the trip in the "Medway." He was provided with a passport from the government of the United States to enable him to pass the blockade; which very questionable policy on the part of that government it is difficult to understand; since they were well aware that Santa Anna was bitterly hostile to them, whatever assurances he may have made to the contrary; and at the same time was perhaps the only man whom the Mexican army would suffer to lead them against the American troops.

On the fifth morning after leaving Havana, at 6 A.M., we made the land, and were soon after boarded by one of the American blockading squadron—the corvette St. Mary's. It was expected that Santa Anna was on board, and the officer said that instructions had been received to permit him to enter Vera Cruz.

At 7 we passed the castle of San Juan de Ulloa, and anchored off the city of the True Cross, or, as it is often and most aptly called, "LA CIUDAD DE LOS MUERTOS," THE CITY OF THE DEAD.

CHAPTER III.

Vera Cruz—Appearance of Town—Cadaverous Population—Sopilotes—Mementos of War—American Bombardment—Unnecessary Act—Preparations for Reception of Santa Anna—Military Display—El Onze—Mexican Soldier—Mexican Fonda—Frijoles—Jolly Priests—Castle of San Juan de Ulloa—Its Garrison—Weakness—The Fever-Cloud—Vera Cruz Market—Fish and Fowl—Papagayas and Snakes.

Vera Cruz derives its name from the first city built on this continent by Cortes, in 1519-20. La villa rica de la Vera Cruz—the rich city of the True Cross—was situated a few miles to the north-east of the present city, and was built by the conquistador as a garrison on which to fall back, in case his expedition into the interior proved a failure.

From the sea the coast on each side the town presents a dismal view of sandhills, which appear almost to swallow up the walls. The town, however, sparkling in the sun, with its white houses and numerous church-spires, has rather a picturesque appearance; but every object, whether on sea or land, glows unnaturally in the lurid atmosphere. It is painful to look into the sea, where shoals of bright-coloured fish are swimming; and equally painful to turn the eyes to the shore, where the sun, refracted by the sand, actually scorches the sight, as well as pains it by the quivering glare which ever attends refracted light.

The city is well planned, surrounded by an *adobe* wall, with wide streets crossing each other at right angles. There are also several large and handsome buildings fast mouldering to decay. One hundred years ago a flourishing commercial city, like everything in Spanish America, it has suffered from the baneful effects of a corrupt, impotent government. Now, with a scanty population, and under the control of a military despotism, its wealth and influence have passed away. The aspect of the interior of the town is dreary and desolate beyond description. Grass grows in the streets and squares; the churches and public buildings are falling to ruins: scarcely a human being is to be met, and the few seen are sallow and lank, and skulk through the streets as if fearing to encounter, at every corner, the personification of the dread vomito, which at this season (August) is carrying off a tithe of the population. Everywhere stalks the "sopilote" (turkey-buzzard), sole tenant of the streets, feeding on the garbage and carrion which abound in every corner.

The few foreign merchants who reside here, remove their families to Jalapa in the season of the vomito, and all who have a few dollars in their pockets betake themselves to the temperate regions. The very natives and negroes are a cadaverous stunted race; and the dogs, which contend in the streets with the sopilotes for carrion, are the most miserable of the genus cur. Just before my window one of these curs lay expiring in the middle of the street. As the wretched animal quivered in the last gasp, a sopilote flew down from the church-spire, and, perching on the body, commenced its feast. It was soon joined by several others, and in five minutes the carcase was devoured. These disgusting birds are, however, useful scavengers, and, performing the duty of the lazy Mexicans, are therefore protected by law.

The town still presents numerous souvenirs of the bombardment by the warlike De Joinville in 1839. The church-towers are riddled with shot, and the destructive effects of shells still visible in the heaps of ruins which have been left untouched. Since my visit it has also felt the force of American ire, and withstood a fierce bombardment for several days, with what object it is impossible to divine, since a couple of thousand men might have at any time taken it by assault. The castle was not attacked, and was concluded in the capitulation without being asked for—*cosa de Mexico.* The town was attacked by the American troops under General Scott within ten months after my visit. It suffered a bombardment, as is well known, of several days, an unnecessary act of cruelty in my opinion, since, to my knowledge, there were no defences round the city which could not have been carried, including the city itself, by a couple of battalions of Missouri volunteers. I certainly left Vera Cruz under the impression that it was not a fortified place, with the exception of the paltry wall I have mentioned, which, if my memory serves me, was not even loopholed for musketry. However, temporary defences might have been thrown up in the interval between my visit and the American attack; still I cannot but think that the bombardment was cruel and unnecessary. The castle could have been carried by a frigate's boarders, having but seven hundred naked Indians to defend it.

At the moment of my arrival there was no little excitement in Vera Cruz. The "siempre heroica"—always heroical city and castle—had pronounced for the immortal saviour of his country, as they styled Santa Anna; forgetting, in their zeal, that twelve months before they had kicked out the same worthy, heaping every opprobrious epithet and abuse that Mexican "facultad de lengua" could devise. Moreover, the hero was hourly expected, and great preparations were on hand for his reception.

With this object the crack regiment of the Mexican army, el onze—the 11th—which happened to be in garrison at the time, cut most prodigious capers in the great plaza several times a-day, disciplinando—drilling for the occasion. Nothing can, by any possibility, be conceived more unlike a soldier than a Mexican militar. The regular army is composed entirely of Indians—miserable-looking pigmies, whose grenadiers are five feet high. Vera Cruz, being a show place, and jealous of its glory, generally contrives to put decent clothing, by subscription, on the regiment detailed to garrison the town; otherwise clothing is not considered indispensable to the Mexican soldier. The muskets of the infantry are (that is, if they have any) condemned Tower muskets, turned out of the British service years before. I have seen them carrying firelocks without locks, and others with locks without hammers, the lighted end of a cigar being used as a match to ignite the powder in the pan. Discipline they have none. Courage a Mexican does not possess; but still they have that brutish indifference to death, which could be turned to account if they were well led, and officered by men of courage and spirit.

Before delivering my letters I went to a fonda or inn kept by a Frenchman, but in Mexico-Spanish style. Here I first made acquaintance with the *frijole*, a small black bean, which is the main food of the lower classes over the whole of Mexico, and is a standing dish on every table, both of the rich and poor. The cuisine, being Spanish, was the best in the world, the wine good, and abundance of ice from Orizaba. Amongst the company at the fonda was a party of Spanish padres, a capellan of a Mexican regiment, and a Capuchin friar. I was invited one evening to their room, and was rather surprised when I found I was in for a regular punch-drinking bout. The Capuchino presided at the bowl, which he concocted with considerable skill; and the jolly priests kept it up until the grey of the morning, when they all sallied out to mass, it being the feast of San Isidro.

The next day I accompanied this clerical party to the castle of San Juan de Ulloa, which we were allowed to inspect in every part. I thought it showed very little caution, for I might have been an American for all they knew to the contrary. The fortress is constructed with considerable skill, but is in very bad repair. It is said to mount 350 pieces of artillery, many of heavy calibre, but is deficient in mortars. The garrison did not amount to more than 700 men, although they were in hourly expectation of an attack by the American squadron; and such a miserable set of naked objects as they were could scarcely be got together in any other part of the world.

Our party was ciceroned by an aide-de-camp of the governor, who took us into every hole and corner of the works. The soldiers' barracks were dens unfit for hogs, without air or ventilation, and crowded to suffocation.

In one of the batteries were some fine 98-pounders, all English manufacture, but badly mounted, and some beautiful Spanish brass guns. Not the slightest discipline was apparent in the garrison, and scarcely a sentinel was on the look-out, although the American squadron was in sight of the castle, and an attack was hourly threatened. On the side facing the island of Sacrificios the defences were very weak; indeed, I saw no obstruction of sufficient magnitude to prevent half a dozen boats' crews making a dash in the dark at the water-batteries, where at this time were neither guns nor men, nor one sentry whose post would command this exposed spot; thence to cross the ditch, which had but two or three feet of water in it, blow open the gate of the fortress with a bag of powder, and no organised resistance could be dreaded when once in the castle.

I pointed this out to one of the officers of the garrison. He answered, "No hay cuidado, no hay cuidado! somos muy valientes,"—"Never fear, never fear! we are very brave here." "Si quieren los Americanos, que vengan"—"If the Americans like to try, let them come."

As we returned at night to Vera Cruz, a dull yellowish haze hung over the town. I asked the "patron" of the boat what it was. Taking his cigar from his mouth, he answered quite seriously, "Señor, es el vomito"—it 's the fever.

There is a very good market at Vera Cruz: the fish department is well worth a visit. At sunrise the Indian fishermen bring in their basket-loads, which they pile on the ground; and the beautiful and varied tints of the fish, which exhibit all the colours of the rainbow, as well as the fish themselves, of all shapes and sizes, form a very pleasing sight. Two hours after sunrise the fish are all sold or removed: indeed, if not immediately cooked they will putrify in a few hours.

The vegetable-market is well supplied, and exhibits a great variety of tropical fruits. The Indians of the "tierra caliente" are neither picturesque in dress nor comely in appearance. They are short in stature, with thick clumsy limbs, broad faces without any expression, and a lazy sullen look of *insouciance*. They are, however, a harmless, inoffensive people, and possess many good traits of character and disposition. In the market devoted to flesh and fowl, parrots form a staple commodity. They are brought in in great numbers by the Indians, who lay great store on a talking-bird, "un papagaya que habla." Peccaries, deer, and huge snakes I also saw exposed for sale.

CHAPTER IV.

Arrival of Santa Anna—Capers of El Onze—Landing of the General—His Appearance—La Señora—Cool Reception—An Emeute—Only a Revolution—Patriotic Tinman—Conference with Santa Anna—Bearding the Lion—Manifiésto—Rumours of Vomito—Prepare to start for the Capital—Castillo—Mexican Dandy—Leave Vera Cruz—The Road—Rainy Weather—Marching Order of Mexican Soldiers—British Sailors.

On the 16th of August the castle, with a salvo of artillery, announced the approach of the steamer having on board the illustrious ex-President—General Santa Anna. At 9 A.M. "el Onze" marched down to the wharf with colours flying and band playing. Here they marched and countermarched for two hours before a position was satisfactorily taken up. An officer of rank, followed by a most seedy aide-de-camp, both mounted on wretched animals, and dressed in scarlet uniforms of extraordinary cut, caracolled with becoming gravity before the aduana or customhouse. A most discordant band screamed national airs, and a crowd of boys squibbed and crackered on the wharf, supplied with fireworks at the expense of the heroic city. By dint of cuffing, el Onze was formed in two lines facing inwards, extending from the wharf to the palacio, where apartments had been provided for the General. Santa Anna landed under a salute from the castle, and walked, notwithstanding his game leg, preceded by his little wife, who leaned on the arm of an officer, through the lane of troops, who saluted individually and when they pleased, some squibbing off their firelocks, and others, not knowing what to do, did nothing.

Don Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna is a hale-looking man between fifty and sixty, with an Old Bailey countenance and a very well built wooden leg. The Señora, a pretty girl of seventeen, pouted at the cool reception, for not one "viva" was heard; and her mother, a fat, vulgar old dame, was rather unceremoniously congéed from the procession, which she took in high dudgeon. The General was dressed in full uniform, and looked anything but pleased at the absence of everything like applause, which he doubtless expected would have greeted him. His countenance completely betrays his character: indeed, I never saw a physiognomy in which the evil passions, which he notoriously possesses, were more strongly marked. Oily duplicity, treachery, avarice, and sensuality are depicted in every feature, and his well-known character bears out the truth of the impress his vices have stamped upon his face. In person he is portly, and not devoid of a certain well-bred bearing which wins for him golden opinions from the surface-seeing fair sex, to whom he ever pays the most courtly attention.

If half the anecdotes are true which I have heard narrated by his most intimate friends, any office or appointment in his gift can always be obtained on application of a female interceder; and on such an occasion he first saw his present wife, then a girl of fifteen, whom her mother brought to the amorous President, to win the bestowal upon her of a pension for former services, and Santa Anna became so enamoured of the artless beauty, that he soon after signified his gracious intention of honouring her with his august hand, after a vain attempt to secure the young lady in a less legitimate manner, which the politic mamma, however, took care to frustrate.

Aug. 17.—We had an *émeute* amongst the Vera-Cruzanos. As I was passing through the great plaza, a large crowd was assembled before the Casa de Ayuntamiento, or town-hall. Accosting a negro, who, leaning against a pillar, was calmly smoking his paper cigar, a quiet spectator of the affair, I inquired the cause of the riotous proceeding. "No es mucho, caballero; un pronunciamiento, no mas," he answered—nothing, sir, nothing, only a revolution. On further inquiry, however, I learned that the cause of the mob assembling before the ayuntamiento was, that the people of Vera Cruz willed that one of that body should, as their representative, proceed to the palace to lay before Santa Anna a statement of certain grievances which they required should be removed. Not one of that body relished the idea of bearding the lion in his den, although supposed at this moment to be on his good behaviour, but one Sousa, a native of Vera Cruz, and by trade a tinman, stepped forth from the crowd and declared himself ready to speak on the part of the people.

They had previously clamoured for Santa Anna to show himself in the balcony of the palace, but he had excused himself on the plea of being unable to stand on account of his bad leg, and said he was ready at any time to receive and confer with one of their body. Sousa, the volunteer, at once proceeded to the palace, and without ceremony entered the General's room, where Santa Anna was sitting surrounded by a large staff of general officers, priests, &c. Advancing boldly to his chair, he exclaimed, "Mi General, for more than twenty years you have endeavoured to ruin our country. Twice have you been exiled for your misdeeds: beware that this time you think of us, and not of yourself only!"

At this bold language Santa Anna's friends expressed their displeasure by hissing and stamping on the floor; but Sousa, turning to them with a look of contempt, continued: "These, General, are your enemies and ours; *y mas, son traidores*—and more than this, they are traitors. They seek alone to attain their ends, and care not whether they sacrifice you and their country. They will be the first to turn against you. *Para nosotros, Vera-Cruzanos qui somos*—for us, who are of Vera Cruz—what we require is this: remove the soldiers; we do not want to be ruled by armed savages. Give us arms, and we will defend our town and our houses, but we want no soldiers."

Santa Anna, taken aback, remained silent.

"Answer me, General," cried out the sturdy tinman: "I represent the people of Vera Cruz, who brought you back, and will be answered."

"To-morrow," meekly replied the dreaded tyrant, "I will give orders that the troops be removed, and you shall be supplied with one thousand stand of arms." "Está bueno, mi General"—it is well, General—answered Sousa, and returned to the mob, who, on learning the result of the conference, filled the air with vivas.

"Valgame en Dios!" exclaimed my friend the negro; "que hombre tan osado es este!"—what pluck this man must have to open his lips to the Presidente!

The next morning Santa Anna left Vera Cruz for his hacienda—Manga del Clavo—first causing a manifiésto to be published, declaring his views and opinions with regard to the present critical state of affairs. This paper was very ably written by Rincon, and exhibited no little cleverness of composition, inasmuch as great tact was required, owing to the numerous tergiversations of Santa Anna, to steer clear of such subjects as would compromise his present declaration in favour of federalism, to which he has hitherto been strenuously opposed. In it he declares his determination to prosecute to the last the war with the United States, and his willingness to sacrifice his life and fortune in defence of his country; deprecates the notion of foreign intervention, and scouts at the idea of the "monarchical question" being introduced into any political discussion. In conclusion, he earnestly besought his countrymen to arm against the common foe.

Two or three days after my arrival in Vera Cruz, suspicious rumours of vomito reached my ears, and caused me to pack up my traps; and having determined to ride to Jalapa, instead of travelling by the lumbering diligencia, my hospitable entertainers, on learning my intention, immediately made arrangements for a supply of cavalry, and placed me under the charge of a confidential servant of the house, who was to pilot me to Jalapa.

About 4 P.M. on the 19th of August, Castillo made his appearance, with a couple of horses equipped in Mexican style, himself attired in a correct road costume—black glazed *sombrero* with large brim and steeple crown, ornamented with a band of silver cord and silver knob on the side; blue jacket with rows of silver buttons, and fancifully braided; *calzoneras* or pantaloons of velveteen, very loose, and open from the hip-bone to the bottom of the leg, the outside ornamented with filagree buttons; under these overalls, the *calzoncillas* or loose drawers of white linen; boots of untanned leather, with enormous spurs, buckled over the instep by a wide embroidered strap, and with rowels three inches and a half in diameter; a crimson silk sash round his waist, small open waistcoat exhibiting a snow-white shirt, a *puro* in his mouth, and a *quarta* or whip hanging by a thong from his wrist. Such was Castillo, not forgetting, however, that in person he was comely to look upon, and, living in an English house, was no libel upon its excellent cuisine, carrying a most satisfactory corporation and a fat good-humoured face.

A common way of travelling in the tierra caliente is by *littera*, a litter carried between two mules, in which the traveller luxuriously reclines at full length, sheltered from the rain and sun by curtains which enclose the body, and smokes or reads at his pleasure. In one of these, about to return empty to Jalapa, I despatched my baggage, consigning a change of linen to Castillo's alforjas or saddle-bags. At 4 P.M. we trotted out of Vera Cruz, and, crossing the sandy plain outside the town, pulled up at an Indian hut where Castillo informed me it was necessary to imbibe a stirrup-cup, which was accordingly presented by an Indian Hebe, who gave us a "buen viage" in exchange for the clacos we paid for the mezcal. The road here left the sandy shore, and turned inland, through a country rank with tropical vegetation, with here and there an Indian hut—a roof of palm-leaves supported on bamboo poles, and open to the wind—peeping out of the dense foliage. We presently came to a part of the road cut up and flooded by the heavy rains which towards sunset poured mercilessly upon us, but not before Castillo had thrust his head through the slit in his serape, and, with shoulders protected by his broad-brimmed sombrero, defied the descending waters. Not so my unlucky self, who, green as yet in the mysteries of Mexican travelling, had not provided against aqueous casualties, and in a few seconds my unfortunate Panama was flapping miserably about my ears, and my clothes as drenched as water could make them. However, there was no remedy, and on we floundered, through pools of mud and water full of ducks and snipe and white herons; the road becoming worse and worse, and the rain coming down with undeniable vigour. Just before sunset we overtook the rear-guard of the valiant Eleventh, which that day had marched from Vera Cruz en route to the seat of war, for the purpose, as one of the officers informed me, "dar un golpe à los Norte Americanos"—to strike a blow at the North Americans.

The marching costume of these heroes, I thought, was peculiarly well adapted to the climate and season—a shako on the head, whilst coat, shirt, and pantaloons hung suspended in a bundle from the end of the firelock carried over the shoulder, and their cuerpos required no other covering than the coatings of mud with which they were caked from head to foot, singing, however, merrily as they marched.

Night now came on, and pitchy dark, and the road was almost impassable from the immense herds of cattle which literally blocked it up. The ganado* all belonged to Santa Anna, whose estate extends for fifty miles along the road, and bore the well-known brand of A. L. S. A.—*alsa*, or forward, as the Mexicans read it, which are the initials of the General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. Finding it utterly impossible to proceed, we stopped at the first Indian hut we came to, where we secured our animals in a shed, and, in company with the rear-guard of the "Onze," who arrived shortly after, made ourselves uncomfortable for the night.

The next morning, before daylight, we were in our saddles, the rain still descending in torrents. "No hay remedio—there 's no help for it"—said Castillo; "we had better push on:" and on we splashed. "Hi esta muy buen coñac—very good brandy up there"—he remarked, after we had ridden a few miles; and, dashing the spurs into his beast, darted up a hill to a house, and called for a tumbler of brandy and milk, which was not unpalatable after our wet ride. Sitting under the verandah were two sailors—deserters from the "Endymion," lying at Sacrificios. They told me they had been to Jalapa on a spree, and now were on their way back to rejoin their ship.

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* *Ganado mayor*—cattle; *ganado menor*—sheep and pigs.

CHAPTER V.

Puente Nacional—Wretched Country—Indian Huts—Indian Contentment—Weather Clears—Bad Roads—Rank Vegetation—Birds and Bugs—El Plan del Rio—Meson—A Male Chambermaid—Valley of El Plan—Los Dos Rios—Peak of Orizaba—Different Scenery—Arrive at Jalapa—Jalapa—Delicious Climate—Scenery—Las Jalapeñas—Female Complexions—Cotton Factories—Neighbourhood—Productions—Coach Travelling to Mexico—Robbers and Robberies—Arrival of English Naval Officers—Preparations for Road—Examine Arms—The Diligencia—Pacific Passengers—Mountain Scenery—Coffre of Perote—Perote and Castle—Road to Puebla—Crosses—Novedades—Arrive at Puebla—Robber Spy—Cosas de Mejico.

THE weather clearing, we resumed our journey, and halted to breakfast at Puente Nacional, once del Rey.

The bridge, built of stone, spans a picturesque torrent, now swollen and muddy with the rains. The village is small and dirty, with a tolerable inn, where the diligencia stops. Here we were regaled with frijoles and chile colorado, and waited upon by a very pretty Indian girl.

The scenery is wild and desolate; the vegetation, although most luxuriant, looks rank and poisonous, and the vapours, which rise from the reeking undergrowth, bear all kinds of malaria over the country. Few villages are met with, and these consist of wretched hovels of unburnt brick (adobe), or huts of bamboo and palm-leaf. Each has its little patch of garden, where the plantain, maize, and chile are grown. Strings of the latter invariably hang on every house, and with it, fresh or dried, the people season every dish. The land appears good, but, where everything grows spontaneously, the lazy Indian only cares to cultivate sufficient for the subsistence of his family. The soil is well adapted for the growth of cotton, sugar, and tobacco. I asked a farmer why he did not pay more attention to the cultivation of his land. "Quien sabe," was his answer; "con maiz y chile, no falta nada"—who wants more than corn and chile, vaya?

"These men are brutes," put in Castillo; "ni vida saben"—they don't know even what it is to live; just then a "biftek à la Ynglesa" in the kitchen of "la casa" in Vera Cruz occurring to his mind's eye.

When we turned out after breakfast we found the heavy rolling clouds clearing off, and the sun shining brightly from a patch of deep blue.

"Ya viene buen tiempo," prophesied our host, as he held my stirrup; and for once he was a true prophet, for we had six or eight hours' magnificent weather, during which the sun dried our clothes, and baked the mud upon them, and we were enabled to keep our cigars alight, which in the morning was an impossibility. The road was wretched, although it has been called by an ingenious traveller "a monument of human industry;" a monument of human ignorance and idleness would be the better term. On each side the scenery was the same—a sea of burning green. Now, however, the woods were alive with birds of gaudy plumage: cardinals, and catbirds, and parrots, with noisy chatter, hopped from tree to tree; every now and then, the Mexican pheasant—*chachalaca*—a large noble bird, flew across the road; and *chupamirtos* (humming-birds) darted to and fro. The pools were black with ducks, cranes, and bitterns; the air alive with bugs and beetles; and in the evening *cocuyos* (fire-bugs) illuminated the scene. Mosquitos were everywhere, and probed with poisonous proboscis every inch of unprotected skin.

At sunset we reached El Plan del Rio, a miserable venta, which we found crowded with cavalry soldiers and their horses, so that we had great trouble in finding room for our own animals. This hostelry belonged to the genus meson, a variety of the inn species to be found only in Mexico. It was, however, a paradise compared to the mesones north of the city of Mexico; and I remember that I often looked back upon this one, which Castillo and I voted the most absolutely miserable of inns, as a sort of Clarendon or Mivart's. Round the corral, or yard, where were mangers for horses and mules, were several filthily dirty rooms, without windows or furniture. These were the guests' chambers. Mine host and his family had separate accommodations for themselves of course; and into this part of the mansion Castillo managed to introduce himself and me, and to procure some supper. The *chambermaid*—who, unlocking the door of the room apportioned to us, told us to beware of the *mala gente* (the bad people) who were about—was a dried-up old man, with a long grizzled beard and matted hair, which fell, guiltless of comb or brush, on his shoulders. He was perfectly horrified at our uncomplimentary remarks concerning the cleanliness of the apartment, about the floor of which troops of fleas were caracolling, while flat odoriferous bugs were sticking in patches to the walls. My request for some water for the purpose of washing almost knocked him down with the heinousness of the demand; but when he had brought a little earthenware saucer, holding about a tablespoonful, and I asked for a towel, he stared at me open-mouthed without answering, and then burst out into an immoderate fit of laughter. "Ay que hombre, Ave Maria Purissima, que loco es este!"—Oh, what a man, what a madman is this! "Servilleta, pañuela, toalla, que demonio quiere?"—towel, napkin, handkerchief—what the devil does he want?—repeating the different terms I used to explain that I wanted a towel.

"Ha, ha, ha! es medio-tonto, es medio-tonto"—a half-witted fellow, I see. "Que demonio! quiere agua, quiere toalla!"—what the d—l! he wants water, towels, everything. "Adios!"

El Plan del Rio is situated in a circular valley or basin, surrounded by lofty hills, which are covered with trees. An old fort crowns the summit of a ridge on the left of the road, from whence a beautiful view is had of the valley, which is the exact figure of a cup. We were now constantly ascending, and, leaving behind us the tierra caliente, were approaching the more grateful climate of the tierra templada, or temperate region. At Los Dos Rios we had a good view of the Peak of Orizaba, with its cap of perpetual snow; and, still ascending, the scenery became more varied, the air cooler, and the country better cultivated; oaks began to show themselves, and the vegetation became less rank and more beautiful. Presently, cresting a hill, before us lay beautiful Jalapa, embosomed in mountains and veiled by cloud and mist.

Jalapa, the population of which is nearly 17,000, is situated at the foot of Macultepec, at an elevation of 4335 feet above the level of the sea. Unfortunately this elevation is about that which the strata of clouds reach, when, suspended over the ocean, they come in contact with the ridge of the Cordillera, and this renders the atmosphere exceedingly humid and disagreeable, particularly in north-easterly winds. In summer, however, the mists disappear, the sun shines brightly, and the sky is clear and serene. At this time the climate is perfectly heavenly; the extremes of heat and cold are never experienced, and an even genial temperature prevails, highly conducive to health and comfort. Fever is here unknown; the dreaded vomito never makes its appearance on the table-land; and, spite of the humid climate, sickness is comparatively rare and seldom fatal. The average temperature is 60° to 65° in summer.

There are seasons, however, when Jalapa presents a direct contrast to such a picture. Heavy dense clouds envelop, as in a shroud, the entire landscape; a floating mist hangs over the town; and the rolling vapours, which pour through the valley, cause a perpetual *chipi-chipi*, as this drizzling rain is termed. The sun is then for days obscured, and the Jalapeño, muffled in his sarape, smokes his cigarro, and mutters, " Ave Maria Purissima, que venga el sol!"—O for a peep at the sun, Holy Virgin!

On a bright sunny day the scenery round Jalapa is not to be surpassed: mountains bound the horizon, except on one side, where a distant view of the sea adds to the beauty of the scene. Orizaba, with its snow-capped peak, appears so close that one imagines it is within reach; and rich and evergreen forests clothe the surrounding hills. In the foreground are beautiful gardens, with fruits of every clime—the banana and fig, the orange, cherry, and apple. The town is irregularly built, but picturesque; the houses are in the style of Old Spain, with windows to the ground, and barred, in which sit the Jalapeñas, with their beautifully fair complexions and eyes of fire.

" Las Jalapeñas son muy halagueñas" is a saying common in Mexico; and bewitching they are, even with their cigaritos, which make a good foil to a pretty mouth. Here is still preserved some of the *sangre azul*, the blue blood of Old Castile. Many of the Jalapa women are dazzlingly fair, whilst others are dark as a Malagueña. In the fonda Vera Cruzana, where I put up, and advise all travellers to do the same, were two daughters of mine host—one as fair as Jenny Lind, the other dark as Jephtha's daughter, and both very pretty. Although the proverb says "Ventera hermosa, mal para la bolsa"—a pretty hostess gives no change—here it is an exception; and my friend Don Juan will take good care of man and beast, and charge reasonably.

Near Jalapa are two or three cotton-factories, which I believe pay well. They are under the management of English and Americans. The girls employed in the works are all Indians or Mestizas, healthy and good-looking. They are very apt in learning their work, and soon comprehend the various uses of the machinery. In the town there is but little to see. The church is said to have been founded by Cortez, and there is also a Franciscan convent. However, a stranger is amply interested in walking about the streets and market, where he will see much that is strange and new. The vicinity of Jalapa, although poorly cultivated, produces maize, wheat, grapes, jalap (from which plant it takes its name); and a little lower down the cordillera grow the vanilla, the bean which is so highly esteemed for its aromatic flavour, and fruits of the temperate and torrid zones.

On inquiry as to the modes of travelling from Jalapa to the city of Mexico, I found that the journey in the diligencia to the capital was to be preferred to any other at this season, on account of the rains; although by the former there was almost a certainty of being robbed or attacked. So much a matter of course is this disagreeable proceeding, that the Mexicans invariably calculate a certain sum for the expenses of the road, including the usual fee for *los caballeros del camino.* All baggage is sent by the arrieros or muleteers, by which means it is ensured from all danger, although a long time on the road. The usual charge is twelve dollars a *carga*, or mule-load of 200 lbs., from Vera Cruz to the capital, being from ten to twenty days on the road. The Mexicans never dream of resisting the robbers, and a coach-load of nine is often stopped and plundered by one man. The ladrones, however, often catch a Tartar if a party of foreigners should happen to be in the coach; and but the other day, two Englishmen, one an officer of the Guards, the other a resident in Zacatecas, being in a coach which was stopped by nine robbers near Puebla, on being ordered to alight and *boca-baxo*—throw themselves on their noses—replied to the request by shooting a couple of them, and, quietly resuming their seats, proceeded on their journey.

During my stay two English naval officers arrived in the diligencia from Mexico. As they stepped out, bristling with arms, the Mexican bystanders ejaculated, "Valgame Dios! What men these English are!" "Esos son hombres!"—These *are* men! The last week the coach was robbed three times, and a poor Gachupin, mistaken for an Englishman, was nearly killed, the robbers having vowed vengeance against the pale-faces for the slaughter of their two comrades at Puebla; and a few months before, two robbers crawled upon the coach during the night, and, putting a pistol through the leathern panels, shot an unfortunate passenger in the head, who, they had been informed, carried arms, and was determined to resist. There is not a travelling Mexican who cannot narrate to you his experiences on "the road;" and scarcely a foreigner in the country, more particularly English and Americans, who has not come to blows with the ladrones at some period or other of his life.

Such being the satisfactory state of affairs, before starting on this dangerous expedition, and particularly as I carried all my baggage with me (being too old a soldier ever to part with that), assisted by mine host Don Juan, I had a minute inspection of arms and ammunition, all of which were put in perfect order. One fine morning, therefore, I took my seat in the diligencia, with a formidable battery of a double-barrel rifle, a ditto carbine, two brace of pistols, and a blunderbuss. Blank were the faces of my four fellow-passengers when I entered thus equipped. They protested, they besought—every one's life would be sacrificed were one of the party to resist. "Señores," I said, "here are arms for you all: better for you to fight than be killed like a rat." No, they washed their hands of it—would have nothing to do with gun or pistol. "Vaya: no es el costumbre"—it is not the custom, they said.

From Jalapa the road constantly ascends, and we are now leaving the *tierra templada*, the region of oaks and liquid amber, for the still more elevated regions of the *tierra fria*—called *cold*, however, merely by comparison, for the temperature is equal to that of Italy, and the lowest range of the thermometer is 62°.

The whole table-land of Mexico belongs to this division. The scenery here becomes mountainous and grand; and on the right of the road is a magnificent cascade, which tumbles from the side of a mountain to the depth of several hundred feet. The villages are few, and fifteen or twenty miles apart, and the population scanty and miserable. No signs of cultivation appear, but little patches of maize and chile, in the midst of which is an Indian hut of reeds and flags.

In the evening we passed through a fine plain in which stands the town and castle of Perote, and near which is the celebrated mountain of basaltic porphyry, which, from the singular figure of a rock on its summit, is called "El Coffre," the chest. The castle of Perote is the "Tower" of Mexico. In it are confined the unlucky chiefs whom revolutions and counter-revolutions have turned upon their backs. The late President Paredes was at this time confined within its walls; and would have, in a day or two, the pleasure of seeing Santa Anna (who himself has been a resident here) pass in state to resume the reins of government. However, in this country, overturned presidents, *et hoc genus omne*, are always well treated, since it is the common fate of them all to be set up and knocked down like ten-pins, and therefore they have a fellow-feeling for each other in their adversity.

In Perote the houses present to the street a blank wall of stone without windows, and one large portal, which leads to the *patio-corral*, or yard, round which are the rooms. This shows the want of security, where every man's house is indeed his castle. From Perote the dangerous road commences, and it is necessary, as the conductor informed me, *tener mucho cuidado*—to keep a sharp look-out.

We left Perote at four in the morning; consequently it was quite dark; and, as morning dawned, the first objects that met our view were the numerous little crosses on the roadside, many of them marking the places where unfortunate travellers had been murdered. These crosses, however, have not always so bloody a signification, being placed in the road oftentimes to mark the spot where a coffin has been set down on its way to the burial-ground, in order that the bearers may rest themselves, or be changed for others. Every now and then our driver looked into the window to give notice that we were drawing near a dangerous spot, saying, "Ahora mal punto, muy mal punto"—now we are in a very bad place; "look to your arms."

The country appeared rich and fertile, but, as usual, was wretchedly cultivated; and the same miserable population of Indians everywhere. Now and then a Mexican proper would gallop past, armed to the teeth, when our conductor invariably demanded, "Que novedad hay?"—is there anything new?—always having reference to the doings of the ladrones. "No hay nada"—there is nothing stirring—was generally the answer; which could seldom be relied on, as there is hardly a ranchero who is not in league with the robbers, and our informant was most likely one of them on the look-out.

At eleven we stopped to breakfast, and were joined by a stout wench of La Puebla, with a nut-brown face and teeth as white as snow. She informed us that there were *muy mala gente* on the road—very bad people—who had robbed the party with which she was travelling but the day before; and, being *muy sin vergüenza*—shameless rascals—had behaved very rudely to the ladies of the party. Our buxom companion was dressed in true Poblana style. Her long black hair was combed over her ears, from which descended huge silver earrings; the red *enagua*, or short petticoat, fringed with yellow, and fastened round her waist with a silk band; from her shoulders to the waist a chemisette was her only covering, if we except the gray reboso drawn over her head and neck; and on her small naked foot was a tiny shoe with silver buckle.

However, we reached Puebla safe and sound, and drove into the yard of the Fonda de las Diligencias, where the coach and its contents were minutely inspected by a robber-spy, who, after he had counted the passengers and their arms, immediately mounted his horse and galloped away. This is done every day, and in the teeth of the authorities, who wink at the cool proceeding.

In a country where justice is not to be had—where injustice is to be bought—where the law exists but in name, and is despicable and powerless, it is not to be wondered at that such outrages are quietly submitted to by a demoralized people, who prefer any other means of procuring a living than by honest work; and who are ready to resort to the most violent means to gratify their insatiable passion for gambling, which is at the bottom of this national evil. It is a positive fact that men of all ranks and stations scruple not to resort to the road to relieve their temporary embarrassments, the result of gambling; and numerous instances might be brought forward where such parties have been detected, and in some cases executed for thus offending against the laws. One I may mention—that of Colonel Yanes, aide-de-camp to Santa Anna, who was garrotted for the robbery and murder of the Swiss consul in Mexico a few years since.

CHAPTER VI.

Puebla—Fertility of the Country—Mexican Antiquities—Fat Woman—Her Consolation—Leave Puebla—Sunrise—Scenery—Rio Frio—Mal Punto—Escort—Dangers Past—Numerous Crosses—False Alarm—First View of Mexico—The Valley—The City—The Streets—Filth—Leperos—Pordioseros — Wretchedness and Vice — Religious Processions — A "Fix"—The Cathedral—Ornaments—A Murillo—Gold and Silver—View from the Summit—Sight-seeing—Museo Nacional—Aztecan Relics — Equestrian Statue of Carlos IV. of Spain—Gallery of Paintings — Tacubaya—Aqueduct—Chapultepec—Cypresses—Magnificent Foliage.

PUEBLA, the capital of the intendancy of that name, is one of the finest cities in Mexico. Its streets are wide and regular, and the houses and public buildings are substantially built and in good taste. The population, which is estimated at between 80,000 and 100,000, is the most vicious and demoralized in the republic. It was founded by the Spaniards in 1531 on the site of a small village of Cholula Indians, and, from its position and the fertility of the surrounding country, was unsurpassed by any other city in the Spanish Mexican dominions. The province is rich in the remains of Mexican antiquities. The fortifications of Tlaxcallan and the pyramids of Cholula are worthy of a visit, and the noble cypress of Atlixo (the *Ahahuete, Cupressus disticha*, Lin.) is 76 feet in circumference, and, according to Humboldt, the "oldest vegetable monument" in the world.

At the posada at Puebla I was introduced to the most enormous woman I have ever seen, but uniting with this awful magnitude the most perfect symmetry of form and feature. Her manners were perfectly lady-like, and she seemed in no degree disconcerted by her unusual size. I sat next her at supper, and in conversation she very abruptly alluded to her appearance, but with the most perfect good humour. "Would you believe, caballero," she said to me, "that there is in this very Puebla a girl actually fatter than I am?" "Many as fat, señorita," I answered, "but" (perpetrating a preposterously far-fetched compliment) "few so fair." "Ah, señor, you are laughing at me," she said: "ya lo se bien que soy vaca, pero hay otra mas gorda que yo." —I know well that I am a cow, but, thank God, there is one other in the world fatter than I am.

I shuddered to see her shovelling huge masses of meat into her really pretty mouth, and thought of what the consequences would be in a few years' time, when her fine figure would subside into a mountain of flesh.

We left Puebla early in the morning, and, as day broke, a scene of surpassing beauty burst upon us. The sun rising behind the mountains covered the sky with a cold silvery light, against which the peaks stood out in bold relief, whilst the bases were still veiled in gloom. The snow-clad peak of Orizaba, the lofty Popocatepetl (the hill that smokes) and Iztaccihuatl (the white woman) lifted their heads now bright with the morning sun. The beautiful plain of Cuitlaxcoapan, covered with golden corn and green waving maize, stretched away to the mountains which rise in a gradual undulating line, from which in the distance shot out isolated peaks and cones, all clear and well defined.

Passing through a beautiful country, we reached Rio-Frio, a small plain in the midst of the mountains, and muy mal punto for the robbers, as the road winds through a pine-forest, into which they can escape in case of repulse. The road is lined with crosses, which here are veritable monuments of murders perpetrated on travellers. Here too we took an escort, and, when we had passed the piñol, the corporal rode up to the windows, saying, "Ya se retira la escolta,"—the escort is about to retire; in other words, Please remember the guard. Each passenger presented him with the customary dos reales, and the gallant escort rode off quite contented. Here too, all the worst *puntos* being passed, my companions drew long breaths; muttered "Ave Maria Purissima—gracias à Dios ya no hay cuidado;" and lit their cigars. We soon after crested the ridge of the mountain, and, descending a winding road, turned an abrupt hill, and, just as I was settling myself in the corner for a good sleep, my arm was seized convulsively by my opposite neighbour, who, with half his body out of the window, vociferated: "Hi esta, hi esta, mire, por Dios, mire!"—Look out, for God's sake! there it is.

Thinking a ladron was in sight, I seized my gun, but my friend, seeing my mistake, drew in his head, saying, "No, no, Mejico, Mejico, la ciudad!"

To stop the coach and jump on the box was the work of a moment; and, looking down from the same spot where probably Cortez stood 300 years ago, before me lay the city and valley of Mexico, bathed by the soft flooding light of the setting sun.

He must be insensible indeed, a clod of clay, who does not feel the blood thrill in his veins at the first sight of this beautiful scene. What must have been the feelings of Cortez, when with his handful of followers he looked down upon the smiling prospect at his feet, the land of promise which was to repay them for all the toil and dangers they had encountered!

The first impression which struck me on seeing the valley of Mexico was the perfect, almost unnatural, tranquillity of the scene. The valley, which is about sixty miles long by forty in breadth, is on all sides enclosed by mountains, the most elevated of which are on the southern side; in the distance are the volcanoes of Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl, and numerous peaks of different elevation. The lakes of Tezcuco and Chalco glitter in the sun like burnished silver, or, shaded by the vapours which often rise from them, lie cold and tranquil on the plain. The distant view of the city, with its white buildings and numerous churches, its regular streets and shaded paseos, greatly augments the beauty of the scene, over which floats a solemn, delightful tranquillity.

On entering the town, one is struck with the regularity of the streets, the chaste architecture of the buildings, the miserable appearance of the population, the downcast look of the men, the absence of ostentatious display of wealth, and the prevalence of filth which everywhere meet the eye. On every side the passenger is importuned for charity. Disgusting lepers whine for clacos: maimed and mutilated wretches, mounted on the backs of porters, thrust out their distorted limbs and expose their sores, urging their human steeds to increase their pace as their victim increases his to avoid them. Rows of cripples are brought into the streets the first thing in the morning, and deposited against a wall, whence their infernal whine is heard the livelong day. Cries such as these everywhere salute the ear:—

"Jesus Maria Purissima; una corta caridad, caballero, en el nombre de la santissima madre de Dios: una corta caridad, y Dios lo pagara a usted"—In the name of Jesus the son of the most pure Mary, bestow a little charity, my lord; for the sake of the most holy mother of God, bestow a trifle, and God will repay you.

Mexico is the head-quarters of dirt. The streets are dirty, the houses are dirty, the men are dirty and the women dirtier, and everything you eat and drink is dirty.

This love of dirt only refers to the Mexicans proper, since the Gachupines,* and all foreigners in the city, and those Mexicans who have been abroad, keep themselves aloof and clean. The streets are filled with leperos and officers in uniform (pleasing themselves as to the style), with priests, and fat and filthy Capuchinos, friars and monks.

Observe every countenance; with hardly an exception a physiognomist will detect the expression of vice, and crime, and conscious guilt in each. No one looks you in the face, but all slouch past with downcast eyes and hang-dog look, intent upon thoughts that will not bear the light. The shops are poor and ill supplied, the markets filthy in the extreme. Let no fastidious stomach look into the *tortillerias*, the shops where pastry is made.

The stranger in Mexico is perpetually annoyed by the religious processions which perambulate the streets at all hours. A coach, with an eye painted on the panels, and drawn by six mules, conveys the host to the houses of dying Catholics who are rich enough to pay for the privilege: before this equipage a bell tinkles, which warns the orthodox to fall on their knees; and woe to the unfortunate who neglects this ceremony, either from ignorance or design. On one occasion, being suddenly surprised by the approach of one of these processions, I had but just time to doff my hat and run behind a corner of a building, when I was spied by a fat priest, who, shouldering an image, brought up the rear of the procession. As he was at the head of a vast crowd who were just rising from their knees, he thought it a good opportunity of venting an anathema against a vile *heretico.* Turning first to the crowd, as much as to say, "Just see what a dressing I am going to give this fellow," he, with a most severe frown, addressed me:—

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* The Gachupin is the term of contempt which was bestowed upon the Spaniards in the War of Independence, and is now invariably used by the lower classes to distinguish a Spaniard from a Mexican.

"Man," said he, "do you refuse to kneel to your God?" "No, mi padre," I answered, "pero àl imagen de madéra"—but to an image of wood.

"Vaya," muttered the padre; "lo te pagara el demonio"—the devil will pay thee—and marched away.

The cathedral is a fine large building of incongruous architecture. The interior is rich in silver and gold candlesticks and ornaments of the precious metals. It is far inferior to the churches of Catholic Europe. I visited it during a grand *funcion*, when it was crammed with leperos and Indians, the odour from whose water-avoiding skins drove me quickly into the open air. I vainly searched for a Murillo, which is said to hang, unnoticed and unhonoured, in some dark corner of the church. After a fruitless search of more than two hours, I gave it up, right glad to think that no production of that great master existed where it would not be appreciated. It is said the quantity of gold and silver plate and ornaments of precious stones possessed by this church are worth several millions sterling. They are, however, carefully hidden, lest they should excite the cupidity of some unscrupulous president; but the gold and silver, &c., actually displayed, would be well worthy the attention of a sacking party of American volunteers, should the city of the Aztecs be rash enough to stand an assault.

The interior is dark and gloomy, with the usual amount of tinsel and tawdry. The view, from the top, of the city and valley of Mexico, is very fine; although the old woman who keeps the key of the tower declares that the "vista mas hermosa"—the most beautiful view—is into the square, where nothing is to be seen but a stand of hack *carratelas*, and the scaffolding round Santa Anna's statue, which has just been dragged from its corner, and re-erected.

There is little or nothing in the shape of sight-seeing in Mexico. The national museum is worth a visit, as it contains a good collection of Mexican antiquities, of a light and trivial character however. I have seen no Aztecan remains which impress me with the most distant idea that the ancient Mexicans possessed any of the arts of civilization, or were further advanced than many other nations of ingenious savages, who work in stones and feathers. In the working of stones they were certainly clever, and the wonder is, with the rude instruments they possessed, how they could fashion into any shape the brittle materials they made use of. Some masks of the human face, cut out of obsidian, are really well executed, as are also several figures of beasts, insects, and reptiles, in amethyst, agate, porphyry, serpentine, &c. In the court-yard of the museum is a colossal equestrian statue of Charles the Fourth of Spain. This used to ornament the great square, where Humboldt assisted in its erection in 1803; but after the War of Independence, when kings went out of fashion in Mexico, it was removed to its present site. As a whole it is a work of merit, and the conception good; but possesses many glaring faults. The legs of the rider and hind quarters of the horse are out of all proportion; nevertheless the animal is a correct study of a Mexican horse. The drapery is good, and the attitude of the horse gives a good idea of a trotting charger.

One of the lions here is the collection of paintings by old (?) masters, belonging to the Conde de Cortina. They are now removed to the Count's *casa de campo*, or country seat, at Tacubaya, and enjoy the reputation of being the choicest gallery on the continent of America. Amongst them are two reputed Murillos, and some others attributed to the first masters.

I gladly availed myself of an opportunity to inspect the collection, which, I regret to say, greatly disappointed me. One of the paintings attributed to Murillo, although of considerable merit, does not possess one iota of the style peculiar to that great master; the other is manifestly spurious. Of the remainder I need only say that they have been collected at great expense, but I fear with little judgment. The Conde de Cortina, the head of an old Spanish family, has expended large sums of money in making this collection, but it is to be regretted that the agents to whom he intrusted the purchase of paintings have, either through ignorance or imposition, squandered away such large sums as would, if judiciously spent, have been sufficient to have purchased many of the finest pictures in Europe.

Tacubaya is the Richmond of Mexico: villas and country residences abound, where the aristocracy resort during the hot months. The road passes the great aqueduct which supplies the city with water from a spring in Chapultepec. It is not strongly built, and the arches exhibit many cracks and fissures occasioned by the earthquakes. At this season the valley was partly inundated, and the road almost impassable to carriages.

By this road Cortez retreated from the city on the memorable "noche triste," the sorrowful night. The fatal causeway, the passage of which was so destructive to the Spaniards, was probably on nearly the same site as the present road, but the latter since that period has entirely changed its character. On returning from Tacubaya, I visited the hill of Chapultepec, celebrated as being the site of Montezuma's palace, on which, towards the close of the 17th century, the viceroy Galvez erected a huge castle, the remains of which are now occupied by the military school.

Far more interesting than the apocryphal tradition of the Indians' palace, the viceroy's castle, or the existing eyesore, is the magnificent grove of cypress, which outlives all the puny structures of man, and, still in the prime of strength and beauty, looks with contempt on the ruined structures of generation after generation which have passed away.

One of these noble trees is upwards of seventeen yards in girth, and the most picturesque, and at the same time most nobly proportioned tree, it is possible to conceive. It rises into the sky a perfect pyramid of foliage, and from its sweeping branches hang pendulous, graceful festoons of a mossy parasite. There are many others of equal height and beauty, but this one, which I believe is called Montezuma's cypress, stands more isolated, and is therefore conspicuously grand. From the summit of the hill, to which a path winds through a labyrinth of shrubs, a fine view of the valley and city of Mexico is obtained, and of the surrounding mountains and volcanic peaks.

CHAPTER VII.

The Paseo—Fashionable Drive—Equestrians—Private Houses—Hotels—Theatres—Streets at Night—Seeing Life in Mexico—A Pulqueria—Taken for a Yankee—Make Peace—Predilection for Guëros—Wounded Lepero—The Barrio de Santa Anna—A Fandango—A Fight—Sauve-qui-peut—Society in Mexico—Preparations for the Reception of Santa Anna—Cosas de Mejico—Yankee Horsedealer—Hiring Servant—Preparations to start for the North.

The "Paseo" is the Hyde Park of Mexico. Here resort, about four in the afternoon, all the gay and fashionable of the city. Coaches, built in the days of our great-grandfathers, rumble along on their ponderous leathern springs, drawn by teams of sleek and handsome mules. Out of the quaint windows peep the lustrous eyes of the señoritas, dressed in simple white. The modern European carriages of the foreign ministers dash past; amongst them, conspicuous for correctness of turn-out, the "Clarence" of her Britannic Majesty's representative, with his lady dressed à la Mexicana, and drawn by a pair of superb mules. Caballeros curvet on their *caballas de paseo*—park hacks—with saddles and bridles worth a Jew's ransom, and all dressed *para la silla*—for the saddle—eschewing everything in the shape of "tail" to their coats; for on horseback the correct thing is the *chaqueta*, an embroidered jacket, alive with buttons and bullion. The sombrero Mexicano, and pantaloons open from the knee and garnished with silver buttons, and silver spurs of enormous size and weight, complete their costume. The horse appointments are still more costly. The saddle, the pommel and cantle of which are of solid silver, is embossed with the same metal in every part; the stirrups, covered by a flap of ornamented leather, and the massive bit, are of silver, and frequently partly of gold; and the reins, and every other portion of the equipment, are in similar style. After a turn or two in the broad drive, the carriages range up side by side along the road, whence their fair inmates admire the passing dandies as they curvet past on their well-trained steeds. To the eye of an Englishman nothing is more ridiculous than a Mexican's seat on horseback: the form of the saddle compels him to sit bolt upright, or rather overhanging the pommel, whilst the stirrups, placed behind the girth, draw his legs far behind the centre of gravity, his toes just touching the ponderous stirrup. Every moment you expect him to fall with his nose between the horse's ears, but the high cantle and pommel hold him as in a vice, and render his being spilt anything but an easy matter.

The Paseo itself is a very poor affair, and made still more so by two ridiculous fountains, which rival in meanness the equally absurd squirts in our Trafalgar Square.

The private houses in Mexico are well built and commodious. The exteriors of many are chastely and most beautifully decorated, and the rooms are lofty and well proportioned. The entrance is by a large gateway (sometimes double, the exterior one being of open iron-work) into the patio or court-yard, round which are the stables, coach-houses, and servants' offices. The visitor has frequently to thread his way through horses and mules, frisking under the hands of grooms, *mozos de caballo*. The dwelling-rooms are on the first and upper stories.

The hotels are few and wretchedly bad. The best is "La Gran Sociedad," under the same roof with the theatre "Nacional," now rechristened of Santa Anna. This is the grand theatre, and is rather a good house, with a company of Spanish comedians. There is also a smaller one, devoted to light comedy and vaudeville. The performers are generally from the Havana, and occasionally a "star" arrives from Old Spain.

The streets of Mexico at night present a very animated appearance. In the leading thoroughfares the *tortilleras* display their tempting viands, illuminated by the blaze from a brazero, which serves to keep the tortillas and chilé colorado in a proper state of heat. To these stalls resort the arrieros and loafers of every description, tempted by the shrill invitations of the presiding fair ones to taste their wares. Urchins, with blazing links, run before the lumbering coaches proceeding to the theatres. *Cargadores*—porters—stand at the corners of the flooded streets, to bear across the thin-booted passenger on their backs. The cries of the *pordioseros*, as the beggars are called from their constant use of "por Dios," redouble as the night advances. The mounted ones urge their two-legged steeds to cut off the crowd thronging towards the theatres, mingling their supplications for alms with objurgations on their lazy hacks.

"Una limosnita, caballerito, por" (to the cargador) "Malraya! piernas de piedra, anda—and-a-a—." A small trifle, my little lord, for the sake of—(aside to the unfortunate porter, in a stage whisper) Thunder and fury, thou stony-legged one! get on for the love of mercy: he is going to give me a claco. *Ar-hé—ar-r-hé.*

Red-petticoated *poblanas*,* reboso-wrapped, display their little feet and well-turned ankles as they cross the gutters; and, cigar in mouth, they wend their way to the fandangos of the Barrio de Santa Anna. From every pulque-shop is heard the twanging of guitars, and the quivering notes of the *cantadores*, who excite the guests to renewed potations by their songs in praise of the grateful liquor. The popular chorus of one of these is:—

"Sabe que es pulque?
Licor divino-o!
Lo beben los angeles
En el sereno-o."

"Know ye what pulque is?
Liquor divine!
Angels in heaven
Prefer it to wine."

Those philosophical strangers who wish to see "life in Mexico" must be careful what they are about, and keep their eyes skinned, as they say in Missouri. Here there are no detective police from which to select a guide for the back slums—no Sergeant Shackel to initiate one into the mysteries of St. Giles's and the Seven Dials. One must depend upon his own nerve and bowie-knife, his presence of mind and Colt's revolver: but, armed even with all these precautions, it is a dangerous experiment, and much better to be left alone. Provided, however, that one speaks the language tolerably well, is judicious in the distribution of his dollars, and steers clear of committing any act of gallantry by which he may provoke the jealousy and *cuchillo* of the susceptible Mejicano, the expedition may be undertaken without much danger, and a satisfactory moral drawn therefrom.

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* The *Poblana* is the *Manola* of Mexico.

One night, equipped from head to foot "al paisano," and accompanied by one José Maria Canales, a worthy rascal, who in every capacity, from a colonel of dragoons to a horse-boy, had perambulated the republic from Yucatan to the valley of Taos, and had inhabited apartments in the palace of the viceroys as well as in the Acordada, and nearly every intermediate grade of habitation, I sallied out for the very purpose of perpetrating such an expedition as I have attempted to dissuade others from undertaking.

Our first visit was to the classic neighbourhood of the Acordada, a prison which contains as unique a collection of malefactors as the most civilized cities of Europe could produce. On the same principle as that professed by the philosopher, who, during a naval battle, put his head into a hole through which a cannon-shot had just passed, as the most secure place in the ship, so do the rogues and rascals, the pickpockets, murderers, burglars, highwaymen, coiners, *et hoc genus omne*, choose to reside under the very nose of the gallows.

My companion, who was perfectly at home in this locality, recommended that we should first visit a celebrated pulqueria, where he would introduce me to a caballero—a gentleman—who knew everything that was going on, and would inform us what amusements were on foot on that particular night. Arrived at the pulque-shop, we found it a small filthy den, crowded with men and women of the lowest class, swilling the popular liquor, and talking unintelligible slang. My cicerone led me through the crowd, directly up to a man who, with his head through a species of sack without sleeves, and *sans chemise*, was serving out the pulque to his numerous customers. I was introduced as "un forastero, un caballero Yngles"—a stranger—an English gentleman, his particular friend. Mine host politely offered his hand, assured me that his house and all in it was mine from that hour, poured us out two large green tumblers of pulque, and requested us to be seated.

It was soon known that a foreigner was in the room. In spite of my dress and common *sarape*, I was soon singled out. Cries of "Estrangero, Tejano, Yanqué, burro," saluted me; I was a

Texan, a Yankee, and consequently burro—a jackass. The crowd surrounded me, women pushed through the throng, *à ver el burro*—to look at the jackass; and threats of summary chastisement and ejection were muttered. Seeing that affairs began to look cloudy, I rose, and, placing my hand on my heart, assured the caballeros y las señoritas that they laboured under a slight error: that, although my face was white, I was no Texan, neither was I Yankee or a jackass, but "Yngles, muy amigo a la republica"—an Englishman, having the welfare of the republic much at heart; and that my affection for them, and hatred of their enemies, was something too excessive to express: that to prove this, my only hope was that they would do me the kindness to discuss at their leisure half an arroba of pulque, which I begged then and there to pay for, and present to them in token of my sincere friendship.

The tables were instantly turned: I was saluted with cries of "Viva el Yngles! Que meueren los Yanqués! Vivan nosotros y pulque!"—Hurrah for the Englishman! Death to the Yankees! Long live ourselves and pulque! The dirty wretches thronged round to shake my hand, and semi-drunken poblanas lavished their embraces on "el guëro." I must here explain that, in Mexico, people with fair hair and complexions are called guëro, guëra; and, from the caprice of human nature, the guëro is always a favourite of the fair sex: the same as, in our country, the olive-coloured foreigners with black hair and beards are thought "such loves" by our fair countrywomen. The guëro, however, shares this favouritism with the genuine unadulterated negro, who is also greatly admired by the Mejicanas.

After leaving the pulqueria, we visited, without suspicion, the dens where these people congregate for the night—filthy cellars, where men, women, and children were sleeping, rolled in sarapes, or in groups, playing at cards, furiously smoking, quarrelling, and fighting. In one we were attracted to the corner of a room, whence issued the low sobs of a woman, and, drawing near the spot as well as the almost total darkness would admit, I saw a man, pale and ghastly, stretched on a sarape, with the blood streaming from a wound in the right breast, which a half-naked woman was trying in vain to quench.

He had just been stabbed by a lepero with whom he had been playing at cards and quarrelled, and who was coolly sitting within a yard of the wounded man, continuing his game with another, the knife lying before him covered with blood.

The wound was evidently mortal; but no one present paid the slightest attention to the dying man, excepting the woman, who, true to her nature, was endeavouring to relieve him.

After seeing everything horrible in this region of crime, we took an opposite direction, and, crossing the city, entered the suburb called the *Barrio de Santa Anna.*

This quarter is inhabited by a more respectable class of villains. The *ladrones à caballo*—knights of the road—make this their rendezvous, and bring here the mules and horses they have stolen. It is also much frequented by the arrieros, a class of men who may be trusted with untold gold in the way of trade, but who are, when not "en atajo" (unemployed), as unscrupulous as their neighbours. They are a merry set and the best of companions on the road; make a great deal of money, but, from their devotion to pulque and the fair sex, are always poor. "Gastar dinero como arriero"—to spend money like an arriero—is a common saying.

In a meson much frequented by these men we found a fandango of the first order in progress. An *atajo* having arrived from Durango, the arrieros belonging to it were celebrating their safe arrival by entertaining their friends with a *bayle;* and into this my friend, who was "one of them," introduced me as an *amigo particular*—a particular friend.

The entertainment was al-fresco, no room in the meson being large enough to hold the company; consequently the dancing took place in the corral, and under the portales, where sat the musicians, three guitars and a tambourine, and where also was good store of pulque and mezcal.

The women, in their dress and appearance, reminded me of the manolas of Madrid. Some wore very picturesque dresses, and all had massive ornaments of gold and silver. The majority, however, had on the usual poblana enagua, a red or yellow kind of petticoat, fringed or embroidered, over the simple chemisette, which, loose and unconfined, except at their waists, displayed most prodigally their charms. Stockings are never worn by this class, but they are invariably very particular in their *chaussure,* a well-fitting shoe, showing off their small well-formed feet and ankles.

The men were all dressed in elaborate Mexican finery, and in the costumes of the different provinces of which they were natives.

The dances resembled, in a slight degree, the *fandango* and *arabe* of Spain, but were more clumsy, and the pantomimic action less energetic and striking. Some of the dances were descriptive of the different trades and professions. *El Zapatero*, the shoemaker; *el Sastroncito*, the little tailor; *el Espadero*, the swordsman, &c., were amongst those in the greatest demand; the guitar-players keeping time and accompanying themselves with their voices in descriptive songs.

The fandango had progressed very peacefully, and good humour had prevailed until the last hour, when, just as the dancers were winding up the evening by renewed exertions in the concluding dance, the musicians, inspired by pulque, were twanging with vigour their relaxed catgut, and a general chorus was being roared out by the romping votaries of Terpsichore, above the din and clamour a piercing shriek was heard from a corner of the corral, where was congregated a knot of men and women, who chose to devote themselves to the rosy god for the remainder of the evening, rather than the exertions of the dance. The ball was abruptly brought to a conclusion, every one hastening to the quarter whence the shriek proceeded.

Two men with drawn knives in their hands were struggling in the arms of several women, who strove to prevent their encounter—one of the women having received an ugly wound in the attempt, which had caused the shriek of pain which had alarmed the dancers.

"Que es eso?"—What is this?—asked a tall powerful *Durangueño*, elbowing his way through the crowd. "Que quieren esos gallos?"—What do those gamecocks want? "*A' pelear?*"—To fight, eh? "Vamos, a ver los toros!"—Come, let us see the fun!—he shouted. In an instant a ring was formed; men and women standing at a respectable distance, out of reach of the knives. Two men held the combatants, who, with sarapes rolled round their arms, passion darting out of their fiery eyes, looked like two bulldogs ready for the fray.

At a signal they were loosed at each other, and, with a shout, rushed on with uplifted knives. It was short work with them, for at the first blow the tendons of the right arm of one of them were severed, and his weapon fell to the ground; and as his antagonist was about to plunge his knife into the body of his disarmed foe, the bystanders rushed in and prevented it, at the same moment that the patrulla (the patrol) entered the corral with bayonets drawn, and *sauve-qui-peut* was the word; a visit to the Acordada being the certain penalty of being concerned in a brawl where knives have been used, if taken by the guard. For myself, with a couple of soldiers at my heels, I flew out of the gate, and never stopped until I found myself safe under the sheets, just as daybreak was tinging the top of the cathedral.

Society in Mexico, although good, is not much sought after by the foreign residents, who have that resource amongst themselves; neither do the Mexicans themselves care to mix with those out of their own circle. The Mexican ladies are totally uneducated, and in the presence of foreigners, conscious of their inferiority, are usually shy and reserved. This of course refers only to general society. In their own houses, and amongst themselves, they are vivacious, and unaffectedly pleasing in their manners and conversation; and in all classes is evinced a warmth of heart and sympathy which wins for the women of Mexico the respect and esteem of all strangers. As for their personal attractions, I will say, that, although not distinguished for beauty, I never once remember to have seen a really ugly woman. Their brilliant eyes make up for any deficiency of feature, and their figures, uninjured by frightful stays, are full and voluptuous. Now and then, moreover, one does meet with a perfectly beautiful creature; and when a Mexican woman does combine such perfection she is "some pumpkins," as the Missourians say when they wish to express something superlative in the female line.

For everything connected with the manners and mantua-making of Mexico, the reader is recommended to consult Madame Calderon de la Barca, who, making allowances for the *couleur de rose* with which she tints all her pictures, is a lively painter of men, manners, and millinery.

Great preparations were in progress for the prpoer reception of the great Santa Anna, who was daily expected to arrive in the city from the Encerro, his country-house, and where, under the pretence that his leg (a never-failing resource) was in such a state of inflammation that he was unable to travel, he had been very wisely waiting the course of events, and until such time as the popular feeling should manifest itself in his favour. His statue, which, on the occasion of his being kicked out of Mexico a year before, had been consigned to a corner, was now restored to light, and in course of erection in the plaza. Painters were busy at the corners of the streets printing his name and erasing the new one, which at his last exit had been substituted for the numerous Calles de Santa Anna.

The *Teatro Nacional* was once more the *Teatro de Santa Anna.* Triumphal arches were erected in every direction, with inscriptions laudatory of his achievements. One, erected on the spot where they, twelve months before, shut the gates on him, throwing his renowned leg after him, hailed him in enormous letters as "El benemerito de su patria: el immortal salvador de la republica: el heroe de Tamaalipas"—the hero of Tamaalipas: the immortal saviour of the republic: the man who deserved well of his country: the hero of a hundred fights. At night a crowd—hired by the friends of Santa Anna—perambulated the streets carrying torches and long stalks of maize, crying, "Viva Santa Anna y Mejico: meuren los estrangeros"—death to the foreigners, &c.

After I had been a few days in Mexico I made preparations for my journey to the north. In my search for horses and mules I paid a visit to the horse-dealing establishment of one Smith, a Yankee, and quite a character, who is making a fortune in the trade of horseflesh. His stables were filled with nags of all sorts and sizes, and amongst them were some of General Taylor's troop-horses, belonging to a detachment of dragoons which was captured by the Mexicans on the Rio Grande. Smith, who is a hearty John-Bull-looking man, has the reputation with the Mexicans of being *muy picaro*—up to snuff—as what horse-jockey is not? but he has all the custom of the city, and is of course a great authority on all subjects connected with horseflesh. A deputation had just waited upon him to persuade him to officiate as Jehu to a carriage and four which was to be despatched some ten miles out of the city to bring in Santa

Anna. 500 dollars was, I believe, the sum offered, which the independent Smith refused, as it was a *sine quâ non* that he should attire himself in a General's uniform, as he called it, but in plain terms, was nothing more or less than a chasseur's livery.

I selected and purchased two horses from his stud, and better animals never felt a saddle: one I rode upwards of 3000 miles, and brought it to the end of the journey without flinching; the other, a little blood-horse from the tierra caliente, with a coat as fine as silk, I was obliged to part with before entering the intemperate climate of New Mexico, where the cold would have quickly killed it. For mules I visited the Barrio de Santa Anna, the head-quarters of the arriero, where I soon provided myself with those useful animals.

The greatest difficulty was to procure servants, who were unwilling to undertake a journey of such a length, New Mexico being here quite a terra incognita, and associated with ideas of wild beasts and wilder Indians, and horrors of all sorts. I at length hired a *mozo* to proceed with me as far as Durango, 550 miles from Mexico, and considered the Ultima Thule of civilization. He was a tall shambling Mexican, from Puebla: his name, as usual, Jesus Maria. His certificate of character announced him to be "muy hombre de bien"—very respectable, faithful, and a good road-servant. His wages were one dollar a-day and his food—"un peso diario y la comida"—or nearly 80*l.* a-year of sterling money.

I was so fortunate as to become acquainted with a young Spaniard who was about to start for the mines of Guadaloupe y Calvo; and as our road as far as Durango was the same, we agreed to travel in company, which was as agreeable on the score of companionship, as it was advantageous in point of security against the attacks of robbers, who, in large bands, infest this road.

We had, however, anything but a pleasant prospect before us, as the rainy season was at its height; the valley of Mexico was inundated, and the roads almost impassable. In the city of Mexico an inundation was dreaded. The streets were many of them covered with water, and the black mud was oozing out from between the stones of the pavement in every direction, showing the boggy nature of the foundation on which the city is built.

CHAPTER VIII.

Leave Mexico—Our Cavallada—Mules in Confusion—Country inundated —Arrieros in Distress—Donkeys "mired down"—Guatitlan—First Halt —Meson—Tapage—A Breakfast—Hacienda de Canañas—Luxurious Bath —Indian Visitors—Miseries of Meson—Vermin—Arrieros' Bivouac—Novedades—Deficiency of Wood—Rio Sarco—A Meson described—Mesas Puestas—Breakfasts—Hacienda de la Soledád—Band of Robbers—Decline Attack—San Juan del Rio—Its Gardens and Fruits—Difficulty of estimating Population—Day's Travelling—Volcanic Region of Jorullo.

On the 14th of September, just as a salvo of artillery announced the entrance of Santa Anna into the city, our cavalcade, consisting of upwards of twenty horses and mules, packed and loose, sallied out of the north gate, and entered a large common outside the city; and then, once out of the streets, where they were easily managed, each loose horse and mule, throwing up its head with a grunt of pleasure at seeing the open country, betook itself to independent expeditions in search of grass. The mozos rushed frantically here and there to collect the scattered atajo. The pack-mules threw up their hind legs and refused to listen to reason. A big beast of a mule, that was carrying my heaviest packs, lay down and rolled, disarranged the *aparejo* or pack-saddle, and off tumbled the baggage into the mud;—my rifle-case disappeared in a deep pool, into which my mozo dived head first to rescue it. By this time the other mules had most of them got rid of their packs and were quietly grazing, but were at length caught and repacked, brought to some degree of order, and we resumed our journey—my *mozo* meeting with an accident which was nearly proving serious; on attempting to remount his horse it plunged and threw him upon his head, and for several minutes, stunned by the fall, he was perfectly insensible. The same horse played me the same trick some days after.

With mules, the first day's start is invariably a scene of the greatest confusion. The animals are wild, the pack-saddles have always something wanting, and the *mozos* half drunk and helpless. In a few days, however, everything is ship-shape; the mules become as docile as dogs, are packed well and quickly, and proceed along the road in regular order.

After proceeding a few miles we found the country entirely covered with water, and the road almost impassable. Six miles from the city we met some cars floating in the road, and the carriers were swimming the cargoes—cases of *cebo* (grease or lard) —to a dry spot. A little farther on a carratela, full of ladies, was stuck hard and fast in the mud; the mules grazing on the road-side, and the men away seeking assistance. A troop of donkeys carrying charcoal to the city presented the most absurd spectacle. The poor patient animals were literally buried in the mud to their very necks, and unable to move a limb. There they remained, the very picture of patience, whilst the arrieros removed their packs and laid them on the mud. Our animals, being strong and fresh, got safely through, after a hard struggle, and by dint of the most incessant vociferations on the part of our *mozos*, and with the assistance of a score of invoked saints. About dusk we reached Guatitlan, a small town fifteen miles from Mexico, and put up in the meson, the corral of which was belly-deep in black mud, and round which were half a dozen rooms filthily dirty and destitute of furniture. We procured for supper a pipkin of rice-soup and tomatas and a dish of frijoles; after which, drenched to the skin and sleepy, I rolled myself in my wet sarape, and rushed into the arms, not of Somnus, but of hundreds of thousands of fleas and bugs and mosquitos, whose merciless attacks continued till two o'clock in the morning, when, swallowing a cup of chocolate, we were in our saddles and on our journey.

Sept. 15*th.*—To avoid the water-covered plains we took the mountain-road, passing through a tract of country covered with lava and scoria, with wild and picturesque scenery. At the little village of Tapage we halted to breakfast, for which purpose, as there was no meson or public-house of any description, we took by storm a little mud-built house, where an old Indian woman was making tortillas at the door. Our *mozos* laid the village under contribution, and soon returned with a hatful of eggs, which our Indian hostess, with the aid of chile colorado and garlic, converted into a palatable dish.

On crossing the bridge over an arroyo outside the village, my attention was drawn to the figure of an Indian who was kneeling before a little cage built in the parapet of the bridge. Looking through the bars, I was surprised to see two exceedingly clever heads of Joseph and Mary in a framed painting. They were executed, the Indian informed me, by an artist who passed through Tapage a short time before.

The country here is very beautiful, but poorly cultivated, and the population squalid and miserable in the extreme. About noon we arrived at the hacienda of Canañas, in which is a meson of the usual description. I enjoyed a bathe in the ice-cold waters of a fierce mountain-stream, which dashes through a wild dell clothed with beautiful shrubs. As I was lying on the ground enjoying a cigar after my bath, a number of Indians approached, and examined me with the greatest curiosity. Many of them had never before seen a foreigner, and, as they stood staring round me, muttered, "Valgame en Dios; Ave Maria Purissima! que güero, güero, y habla como nosostros!"—How white, how white is this man, and yet speaks as we do!

The day was beautiful; and as we had finished our day's journey of thirty-five miles by one o'clock, the afternoon was devoted to cleaning mules and horses and arranging aparejos. Our supper consisted of rice, chile, and frijoles, after which I rolled myself like a mummy in my sarape, and, spite of entomological attacks, was asleep in an instant, and stood the assaults of mosquito, bug, and flea, until the mesonero roused me at three o'clock with a cup of chocolate, which is the only obtainable breakfast in all the mesones on the road.

16*th.*—We picked our way up a mountain in the dark, through a perfect sea of rocks and stones, and on the summit came suddenly upon the bivouac of a large party of arrieros, who were lying snoring in their sarapes round a roaring fire, their mules grazing round them. I got off my horse to light a cigar at their fire, when one of them, starting up and seeing a stranger, shouted "Ladrones!" which quickly roused the rest, who seized their escopetos and shouted "Where, where?" Seeing their mistake, they rubbed their eyes, and asked the news—the novedades—

which I found with them related to the state of the roads, and not revolutions, counter-revolutions, and the like, with which, true philosophers, they never trouble their heads. In the first part of this day's journey the country was mountainous, and covered with dwarf-oak and ilex. We then entered upon a tract of open undulating downs dotted with thickets, but with no signs of habitation. Every eight or ten miles we passed a miserable Indian village with its patch of maize, but the country is entirely uncultivated with this exception, and not a soul is met on the road. The downs here resemble the rolling prairie of the far West, are covered with excellent grass, and capable of supporting immense herds of cattle. The plains are singularly destitute of trees, which the Mexicans say were destroyed by the Spanish conquerors, but with what object it is impossible to understand, for the want of fuel is a great drawback to the settlement of this portion of the country.

At 2 P.M. we arrived at the end of our day's journey, thirty-five miles, halting at the Hacienda del Rio Sarco—the farm of the muddy brook. We found here a detachment of cavalry on their way to the seat of war, and three staff-officers requested permission to join our party the next day as a security against robbers. The meson was better than usual, being the stopping-place of the diligencia to Fresnillo; but of beds we had taken a long leave; at least I had—for my companion, more luxurious, carried a camp-bedstead, which was the load of two mules.

I do not think I have fully described a meson, which, as it is a characteristic discomfort of Mexican travelling, deserves a sketch.

The meson is everywhere the same in form; a large corral, or yard, entered by a huge gateway, is surrounded by some half-dozen square rooms without windows or furniture. In one corner is generally a stone platform raised about three feet from the floor of clay. This is the bed. A little deal table is sometimes furnished if demanded. In one corner of the corral is the *cocina*, the kitchen, so called—*lucus a non lucendo*—from the fact that nothing is cooked there; and in an outer yard is the *caballeriza*, the stable, with a well in the centre. The mules are unpacked and the baggage secured in one of the rooms destined for the masters, while the aparejos and saddles, &c., are placed in another occupied by the servants. On entering, the *mozo* shouts for the *mesonero*, the landlord, who makes his appearance, armed with the key of the granary, where corn and straw are kept. He condescends to serve out the straw and barley, or maize, as the case may be, all of which is duly weighed. The mules and horses are consigned to the stable and fed, after which the *mozos* forage for themselves and masters. The following conversation then takes place with the landlord:—

Mozo. "Amigo, que hay a comer?"—What is there to eat?

Mesonero. "Ah, señor, aqui no hay nada"—Ah, my lord, there is nothing here.

Mozo. "Valgame Dios, que pais es este!"—Heaven defend me, what a country have we come to!

Mesonero. "Si, señor, es muy povre"—It 's true, my lord, it 's a very poor country.

Mozo. "Pero que vamos hacer? Estan muriendo de hambre los caballeros"—But what are we to do? The gentlemen are dying of hunger.

Mesonero. "Si, sus mercedes lo gustan, hay pollo, hay frijoles, hay chile colorado, hay tortillas"—Well, if their worships like it, they can have a fowl and frijoles, and red peppers and tortillas.

Mozo. "Esta bueno, amigo!"—Capital, my friend! and let there be enough for us too; and then "Quien sabe" how much corn the horses eat! Eh, my friend (winking his eye): "Vaya, que vengan"—Go to, let them be prepared.—Exit *Mesonero.*

In due course several pipkins make their appearance, containing the pollo, the frijoles, the chile colorado, and a pile of tortillas: knives, spoons, and forks are not known in a meson.

In the morning, before daylight, the mesonero makes his appearance with little cups of coffee, and *biscochos* (a sweet cake), and presents the bill.

17*th.*—Leave Rio Sarco—the Mexican officers in company. These worthies amused us vastly by their accounts of what they were going to do. General Ampudia, they said, was merely waiting for the Americans to advance, when he intended to entrap them, leap upon and annihilate them at once; that hitherto he had had but raw troops, rancheros and the like, but, when the regular cavalry reached him, then, a Dios! he *would* act.

The country, like that through which we passed yesterday, was undulating, with fine downs and excellent pasture. The villages, consisting of a few huts built of adobes, were few and far between. Before the doors of several were placed small stools spread with a white cloth, a sign that there the hungry traveller might break his fast; and at one of these *mesas puestas* we made it a custom every morning to halt, and discuss the usual fare of eggs, frijoles, and chile. On a large level plain covered with cattle, and better cultivated than is generally the case, stands the hacienda de la Soledád (of solitude), well named, since it stands alone in the vast plain, the only object which breaks the monotony of the view for many miles. The plain is surrounded by mountains, and the road passes over a stony sierra, thickly covered with the yellow-flowered nopalo, a gigantic species of cactus.

As we were slowly traversing the rocky sierra, we descried, a few hundred yards ahead of us, a band of seven horsemen drawn up across the road. One of my companion's servants, who had been many years a smuggler on this road, instantly recognised them as a well-known band of robbers: we therefore, as their object was plain, collected our mulada into a compact body, and, distributing our party of six, half on each side, we unslung our carbines, threw the flaps off our holsters, and steadily advanced, the Spaniard and myself in front, with our pieces cocked and ready for service. The robbers, however, saw at a glance that two of us were foreigners, for whom and their arms they have a great respect, and, wheeling quickly on one side of the road, they hitched their ready lassos on the horns of their saddles, and, remaining in line, allowed us to pass, saluting us with "Adios, caballeros, buen viage!"—a pleasant journey to you —the leader inquiring of one of the mozos, as he passed, whether the diligencia was on the road and had many passengers?

They were all superbly mounted, and well armed with carbine, sword, and pistols; and each had a lasso hanging on the horn of his high-peaked saddle. "Adios, amigos," we said, as we passed them, "y buena fortuna"—and good luck this fine morning.

Crossing the sierra, we descended into a level and beautiful champaign, through which meandered a rushing stream, the Rio Lerma. The soil seemed everywhere to be rich and fruitful, but no signs of cultivation appeared until we approached San Juan del Rio, a town of considerable size, and here the milpas, the maize-fields, looked green and beautiful. The town, when seen from the sierra, as we descended into the plain, looked exceedingly Spanish and picturesque. Indeed, in crossing these vast and uncultivated tracts, anything in the shape of human abode is grateful to the eye; and even the adobe hut of the Indian, with its mesa puesta, is a refreshing oasis in these desert solitudes. San Juan del Rio is very beautifully situated, and surrounded by fine gardens, which are celebrated for grapes and *chirimoyas*. It is difficult to arrive at anything like a correct estimate of the population of a Mexican town, unless by comparing the size with that of another, the number of whose inhabitants is known; and it is almost impossible to obtain anything like correct information on any statistical point from a Mexican, who, for the glory of his town or province, will invariably give an absurdly exaggerated statement. Thus, on asking in San Juan of a respectable merchant what was the number of its inhabitants, he gravely answered, "Mas que ochenta mil"—more than eighty thousand; and on another occasion, on asking the same question of a "rico" of Taos, a valley of some twelve thousand inhabitants, he answered without hesitation, "two millions."

At a rough guess I should estimate the population of San Juan del Rio at eight or ten thousand.

The houses are generally of one story, and built of stone, whitewashed, with barred windows,* the same as in old Spain, looking into the streets. No particular trade appears to be carried on in the town, if we except begging, which here, as everywhere else in the country, is in a most flourishing condition.

We arrived at San Juan about noon, although our day's journey was thirty-five miles; but our animals were getting more tractable, and travelled with less disorder, and consequently performed the journey quicker, and with less fatigue.

18*th*.—The road to-day was better than usual, although we passed through a broken country, diversified by mountain, rugged sierras, and fertile plains. Our practice was to start before daylight in the morning, by which means we avoided travelling in the very hot part of the day, stopping to breakfast wherever a "mesa puesta" presented itself; our animals, in the mean while, travelling on, performing the whole day's journey without stopping, and which, I believe, is the best plan; for a halt of a few minutes does not rest the animals, and the removal of packsaddles from the heated beasts often produces troublesome wounds.

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* The *rejas* of the Moorish houses of Andalusia.

The district in which we were now travelling is situated on the verge of the volcanic region of Jorullo, where, in 1759, occurred one of the most extraordinary phenomena which has ever been observed. A large tract which had long since been subjected to volcanic action, but for many centuries had been undisturbed, was suddenly the scene of most violent subterraneous commotion.

A succession of earthquakes continued for the space of two months, to the great consternation of the inhabitants, at the end of which time they subsided for a few days, but suddenly recommenced with frightful subterranean noises and continued shocks. The frightened Indians fled to the neighbouring mountains, whence they beheld, with horror and alarm, flames issuing from the plain, which heaved and tossed like a raging sea, rocks and stones being hurled high in air; and suddenly the surface of the plain was seen gradually to rise in the shape of a dome, throwing out at the same time numerous small cones and masses, which rose to an elevation of 1200 and 1400 feet above the original level of the plain.

This is the first of a series of volcanic districts which stretch from the valley of Mexico along the whole of the table-land, at irregular distances from each other.

This morning a village presented itself to us, just as we had given up all hopes of meeting a breakfast, and a promising-looking whitewashed house augured well for our hungry stomachs. Unfortunately some arrieros had been before us, and all we could muster was a *guisado* of well-picked bones and some chile'd frijoles.

Descending from the sierra, we entered a magnificent plain enclosed by mountains, and arrived at Queretaro at two in the afternoon, distant from San Juan del Rio forty miles, it being the first town of size or note we had yet seen since leaving Mexico.

CHAPTER IX.

Queretaro—Gardens—Factories—Tobacco—Monopoly of Cigars—Pulque—Colinche—Tunas—Pulque-making—Its Consumption and Flavour—Streets of Queretaro—Public Bathing—Ladies in the Gutters—Sin Vergüenza—Miserable Accommodation—Tortilleras—Novel Currency—Soap for Silver—Queretaro to Celaya—Limestone—Descent from the Table-Land—Climate changes—The Organo—Cactus Hedges—Bad Roads—El Paseo—Magueyes and Nopalos—Prickly Pears—Celaya—The Bridge—Church and Collecturia—Trade and Population of Town—Productions—Abundance of Hares—La Xuage—Indian Church Ceremonies—Curiosity of Natives—Seeing the "Güero"—Temascatéo—Mine Host—His Ideas of England—Chapel of Don Miguel—Robbers—Mules disabled.

Queretaro, the chief city of the department of that name, is well built, and contains many handsome churches and other buildings. Its population is over forty thousand, twelve thousand of whom are Indians. It is surrounded by beautiful gardens and orchards, which produce a great quantity of fruit for the market of the capital. It has several cloth-factories, which employ a considerable number of Indians, but are not in a very flourishing state. An aqueduct of stone conveys water to the city from some springs in the neighbourhood. Its chief trade is in the manufacture of cigars of the tobacco of the country.

The tobacco, as in France and Spain, is a government monopoly. The privilege of cultivating the plant is limited to a small extent of country in the departments of Vera Cruz, Puebla, and Oajaca; but lately, on account of its isolated position, and the great distance from the capital, with its consequent difficulty of transport, the territory of New Mexico is privileged to grow tobacco for its own consumption. The tobacco grown in the above districts is purchased by the government at a stated price, and its manufacture is committed to individuals in different departments. This monopoly, together with that of salt and gunpowder, has always been a source of annoyance to the government, and ill feeling on the part of the people. The revenue produced by the tobacco monopoly does not amount to more than half a million of dollars, owing to the pickings and stealings carried on in this as well as every other government department. If properly managed, it would be the source of a considerable and certain revenue. As it is, little or nothing finds its way into the treasury after the expenses of the concern are paid.—(Cosas de Mejico.)

The cigars of Queretaro are of a peculiar shape, about three inches long, and square at both ends. To one accustomed to the tobacco of the Havana the pungent flavour of the Queretaro cigars is at first disagreeable, but in a short time the taste acquired for this peculiar raciness renders all other tobacco insipid and tasteless. Excellent pulque is made here; and a beverage called *colinche*, expressed from the juice of the *tuna* (fruit of the prickly pear), I tasted for the first time. It is of a blood-red colour, but of sharp and pleasant flavour.

As we were now in the land (par excellence) of pulque, the drink of thirsty angels, a short description of this truly national liquor and its manufacture will not be out of place. The maguey, American aloe—Agave Americana—is cultivated over an extent of country embracing 50,000 square miles. In the city of Mexico alone the consumption of pulque amounts to the enormous quantity of eleven millions of gallons per annum, and a considerable revenue from its sale is derived by government. The plant attains maturity in a period varying from eight to fourteen years, when it flowers; and it is during the stage of inflorescence only that the saccharine juice is extracted. The central stem which encloses the incipient flower is then cut off near the bottom, and a cavity or basin is discovered, over which the surrounding leaves are drawn close and tied. Into this reservoir the juice distils, which otherwise would have risen to nourish and support the flower. It is removed three or four times during the twenty-four hours, yielding a quantity of liquor varying from a quart to a gallon and a half.

The juice is extracted by means of a syphon made of a species of gourd called *acojote*, one end of which is placed in the liquor, the other in the mouth of a person, who by suction draws up the fluid into the pipe and deposits it in the bowls he has with him for the purpose. It is then placed in earthen jars, and a little old pulque—madre de pulque—is added, when it soon ferments, and is immediately ready for use. The fermentation occupies two or three days, and when it ceases the pulque is in fine order.

Old pulque has a slightly unpleasant odour, which heathens have likened to the smell of putrid meat; but, when fresh, is brisk and sparkling, and the most cooling, refreshing, and delicious drink that ever was invented for thirsty mortal; and when gliding down the dust-dried throat of a wayworn traveller, who feels the grateful liquor distilling through his veins, is indeed the "licor divino," which Mexicans assert, is preferred by the angels in heaven to ruby wine.

To return to Queretaro. As we entered the town by the garita, in a *desague*, or small canal, which ran by the side of and in the very street, were a bevy of women and girls "in the garb of Eve," and in open day, tumbling and splashing in the water, enjoying themselves like ducks in a puddle. They were in no degree disconcerted by the gaze of the passengers who walked at the edge of the canal, but laughed and joked in perfect innocence, and unconsciousness of perpetrating an impropriety. The passers-by appeared to take it as a matter of course, but we strangers, struck with the singularity of the scene, involuntarily reined in our horses at the edge of the water and allowed them to drink, during which we were attacked by the swarthy naiads with laughing and splashing, and shouts of "Ay que sin vergüenzas!"—what shameless rogues! "Echa-les, muchachas!"—at them, girls; splash the rascals!—and into our faces came showers of water, until, drenched to the skin, we were glad to beat a retreat.

We found the town full of troops en route to San Luis Potosi, and had great difficulty in finding a corral for our animals: ourselves we were fain to stow away in a loft above the corral, where, amongst soldiers and arrieros, we passed a flea and bug ridden night.

There was nothing eatable in the house, and we sallied out to the stall of a tortillera in the market-place, where we took a standing supper of frijoles and chile as usual. On presenting a silver dollar in payment, I received eight cakes of soap in change—current coin of Queretaro.

"Valgame Dios!" I exclaimed as the saponaceous medium was piled into my sombrero.

"Virgen Purissima! Ave Maria!" returned the unmoved tortillera; "y javon el mas blando"—and the softest of soap too—she added, as I eyed the curious currency. "Vaya."

I had intended to remain a day or two in Queretaro,* but the town was so crowded with soldiers of the "liberating army," and the accommodation for man and beast at the mesones was so execrable, that I determined to proceed at once.

The next morning, the 19th, our lazy mozos, having indulged too freely in pulque the night before, did not make their appearance until 5 A.M.: we therefore made a late start, and were still further delayed by our animals, accustomed to start in the dark, taking it into their heads to explore the town, and persisting in turning down every street but the right one.

Between Queretaro and Celaya the geological features of the country undergo a change, limestone taking the place of the primary and volcanic rocks over which we had till now been passing. We appeared also to be gradually, but perceptibly, descending from the high table-lands, and the climate became warmer and more tropical. The plains are exceedingly beautiful, teeming with fertility, and better cultivated. The gardens and maize-patches of the small Indian villages are enclosed with hedges, or rather walls, of *organo*, a species of single, square-stemmed cactus, which grows to the height of forty and fifty feet. It is called *organo* on account of its resemblance to the pipes of an organ. Planted close together, the walls of organo are impervious to pigs and poultry, and form admirable corrals to the Indian huts. Here the houses are built of uncemented limestones, piled loosely one on the other, and are sometimes roofed with talc. The road was flooded and impassable, and we were obliged to wade for many miles through a lagune, which was very distressing to the animals. The mules frequently sank so deep into the mud that we were obliged to unload the packs before they could extricate themselves.

During the day we passed through "El Paseo," a comical little place in the midst of the mud, and surrounded by plantations of *magueyes*. The houses were all without windows, and the inhabitants, mostly Indians, appeared to have no other occupation than making pulque and drinking it. At a house where the usual sign of a maguey-leaf hung at the door, I had a most delicious draught of pulque, fresh from the plant, sparkling and effervescent as champagne, and fifty times more grateful. Magueyes and nopalos* now lined the road, the latter loaded with fruit. The Indians gather it with long sticks with a fork at one end, in which they secure the tuna.† Near every village, and sometimes at great distances, are seen women and girls under a tree, with enormous piles of this refreshing fruit prepared for the mouth by the removal of the prickles. I have seen our *mozos* attack a pyramid of tunas three feet high, and demolish it before I smoked out a cigar. The fruit is full of juice, and is said to be very wholesome and nourishing. I invariably carried a knife and fork in my holsters, and, travelling along, without stopping would make a thrust with my fork at some tempting tuna which overhung the road, and thus quench my thirst in the absence of pulque. The colinche made from the juice of the tuna is also very agreeable.

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* Distance from San Juan del Rio to Queretaro, forty miles.

We entered Celaya by a handsome bridge over the Lerma. Inscribed on a stone let into the parapet is a notice to travellers, that the good people of Celaya erected this bridge "por el beneficio de los viageros"—for the benefit of the wayfarer,—which fact they take care shall not be forgotten. Like all Mexican towns, Celaya is full of churches and leperos, and a conspicuous object is the large collecturia, a building where the tithes of corn and fruits belonging to the Church are kept. In most villages the collecturia stands side by side with the iglesia, and is invariably the larger building of the two.

The Carmelite church is an imposing structure of mixed architecture, with Corinthian and Ionic columns. The interior is sombre and gloomy, but enriched with a great quantity of gold and silver ornaments.

The trade of the town consists in the manufacture of saddles, bridles, and articles of leather required for the road. Population about 7000. Grain of all kinds is most prolific and abundant in the plains of Celaya, and horses and mules are bred in considerable numbers. The distance from Queretaro is thirty-seven miles.

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* On a prickly pear I observed a growth of misletoe (? orchis) with a superb crimson flower.

† Fruit of the prickly pear.

20th.—Leaving Celaya, we passed over a wild and but partially cultivated country, leaving Salamanca on the left. Hares of very large size, and tame as dogs, abound on these plains, and our march to-day was enlivened by an incessant popping of carbines and rifles. In one patch of mezquit, a thorny shrub very common on the plains, I counted seventy hares in a little glade not one hundred yards square, and they were jumping out of the grass at every step of our animals. We breakfasted at a little Indian village called La Xuage, in the comical-looking church of which a grand funcion was in progress, and whilst our meal was in preparation we strolled to the iglesia to see what was going on. The priest, equipped in full uniform, was engaged before the altar praying with open book, and at particular passages gave a signal with his hand behind his back, when half a score of Indian boys outside immediately exploded a number of squibs and firewheels, and a bevy of adult Indians fired off their rusty escopetas, the congregation shouting vociferously. At the time when one of the salvos should have taken place, and a huge trabuco fired off, which was fastened for safety to the door of the church, the padre rushed out in the middle of his discourse and clapped a match to the bunghole, giving a most severe look at the neglectful bombardier, and, banging off the blunderbuss, returned book in hand to the altar, where he resumed his discourse.

The farther we advanced from Mexico the more curious became the provincials in examining "los estrangeros" and their equipments. Our hostess in La Xuage, after she had served the eggs and frijoles, rushed to all her female acquaintance with the news that two strangers were in her house, and "por Dios" that they should come and see the güero. As a "güero" I was an object of particular attention. I was examined from head to foot, and the hostess took upon herself to show me off as a jockey would a horse. My hair was exposed to their wonder and admiration; and "*mire*," added my exhibitor, taking me by the moustache, "mire sus bigotes, son güeros tambien"—and do look here, if his bigotes are not güeros too. "Valgame Dios!"

Nothing excited the curiosity and admiration of the men so much as the sight of my arms. My double rifle, and servant's double-barrelled short carbine and pistols, were handled, and almost worshipped. "Armas tan bonitas" they had never seen. With such weapons, they all agreed, neither Indian nor Texan, nor el demonio himself, was to be feared. One old Indian, who told me he had served against all the enemies of the republic, was incredulous when they told him that the guns were double. Half blind, he thrust his fingers into the muzzles, and, assured of the fact, muttered, "Ave Maria! dos-tiros, dos-tiros! Valgame Dios! dos-tiros, dos-tiros; dos tiros, dos-balas. Jesus Maria! dos tiros!"—all which exclamations hinged upon the extraordinary fact of a gun possessing two barrels and two balls.

After a long journey of nearly fifty miles through an uninteresting country, we arrived at the solitary rancho of Temascatéo, standing alone in a large uninhabited plain, which bears the reputation of being infested with robbers, and "muy mala gente" from the towns of Celaya, Salamanca, and Silao.

Mine host of Temascatéo was the beau-ideal of a ventero. Fat and pulque lined, his heavy head, with large fishy eyes, almost sank into his body, his neck, albeit of stout proportion, being inadequate to support its enormous burden. Concealed from his sight behind the sensible horizon of a capacious paunch, a pair of short and elephantine legs shook beneath their load. The stolid heavy look of this mountain of meat was inexpressible. Sitting outside the house in a chair, with a paper cigar in his mouth, he directed the issue of the fodder; his wife, a bustling, busy dame, almost as unwieldy as her spouse, doing the talking part of the business. The only words which appeared able to force their way through his adipose larynx were "Si, señ-or; No, señ-or," from the bottom of his stomach. After supper I paid the worthy couple a visit, and, presenting mine host with a real Havana, it threw him into such a state of excitement and delight that I expected to see him either burst, or subside in an apoplectic fit.

"Dios mio, Dios mio!" he grunted; "a *puro* all the way from Havana!" turning it in his hands and kissing it with affection. His wife was called to see it. Was there ever such a beauty of a puro? He had not smoked one such for thirty years. Asking me all the news of the war, he remarked that los Tejanos, as the Americans are called here, were very bad Indians and cannibals; that it was horrible to think of such people taking the country. Much better, he said, if the English, who, he had heard, were a very strong and rich nation, with "muy poco desorden en su gobierno,"—very little disorder in its government—were to take it; and as England was "poco mas alla de Mejico"—only a little the other side of Mexico; in fact, a neighbour—it would not be so bad.

A room in the rancho, as is often the case, was fitted up as a little chapel, with a figure of San Miguel, "imagen muy hermosa y bien pintada"—a very beautiful and well-painted image, they told me; and as this happened to be a "dia de fiesta," or feast-day, a *funcion* was to be held at nine o'clock in honour of the saint, to which I was duly invited, but declined on the plea of fatigue and sleepiness.

I was roused at midnight by our host, who came to inform me that a band of robbers had just left the house, where they had stopped for a dram, and, after inquiring about my party, had proceeded on the road to Silao. He said he knew them to be muy mala gente, and warned me to be on my guard, even that very night, and in the house, "as who knows," he said, "but they may return and murder us all?" However, I was too sleepy to watch, and, merely putting another pair of pistols within my blanket, I was soon in the land of dreams, where not even a ladron disturbed me. The next morning one of my mules was found to be so ill that she was unable to carry her pack; and another, belonging to my friend the Spaniard, had given out entirely, and was lying in the corral unable to rise. Her shoes were taken off, and she was left in the hands of the mesonero. My sick mule (she had a bad fistula in the shoulder, which broke out the day after I left Mexico) was relieved by one which I hired at the rancho to carry the pack as far as Silao, where I intended to purchase two or three more.

CHAPTER X.

To Silao—Treatment of Mules—Purchase a Pair—Their Characters—Silao Slopsellers—Fruit-women—Fruit—Leperos—Washerwomen—Sin Vergüenzas—Silao—Its Population—Productions—Jalisco—Its Fertility and Advantages—The Plains of Silao—Communication with the Pacific—Silao to La Villa de Leon—Arrieros—Leon—Vicious Population—A "Scrape"—A Cuchillada—Clear out—Volcanic Sierra—Tabular Mountains—Roadside Breakfast—Lagos—Dia de Fiesta—The Road Travellers—Street Bathing—Pedlers—Gambling Booths—Singing Women—Popular Song—The Soldier's Courtship—Lagos to La Villa de la Encarnacion—Broken Bridge—Adobe Houses—Lagos—Resembles Timbuctoo—Church-Organ—Polka—Leperos—Mutilated Object—A pleasant Bedfellow.

21st.—We left the rancho late, as we had only twenty-four miles to travel; and moreover we wished to have our little affair with the robbers (which was expected) in broad daylight, and, passing through a fertile but uncultivated plain, reached Silao in the middle of the day.

In Silao I spent the greater part of the day in hunting up and down the town for mules; and, although hundreds were brought to me, there was scarcely one that was not more or less wounded by pack-saddles. It is no uncommon thing to see mules so lacerated by the chafings of the aparejos, that the rib-bones are plainly discernible, and in this state the poor animal is worked without intermission. With proper care an animal may perform the longest journeys under a pack without injury. Although the Mexicans are from childhood conversant with the management of mules, it is astonishing what palpable errors they commit in the care of their beasts. The consequences of their system were very manifest in our journey to Durango. My companion allowed his mozos to treat his animals according to their system, whereas mine were subject to an entirely different one, from which I never permitted the servants to deviate.

On coming in after a journey of forty miles, performed for the most part under a burning sun, my companion's animals were immediately stripped of their saddles, and frequently of large portions of their skin at the same time: they were then instantly taken to water, and permitted to fill themselves at discretion. Mine, on the other hand, remained with loosened girths until they were nearly cool, and were allowed to drink but little at first, although on the road they drank when water presented itself. Before reaching Durango the advantages of the two systems were apparent. The Spaniard lost three mules which died on the road, and all his remaining horses and mules were actually putrefying with sores. My animals arrived at Durango fat and strong, and without a scratch, and performed the journey to Santa Fé in New Mexico, a distance of nearly two thousand miles by the road I took, in fifty-six days, and with ease and comfort.

After rejecting a hundred at least which were brought for my inspection, I purchased a *tronco*—a pair—of Californian mules, than which no better ever carried saddle or aparejo. This pair, with the two horses I brought with me from Mexico, were the most perfectly enduring animals I ever travelled with. No day was too long, no work too hard, no food too coarse for them. One of the mules, which, from her docility and good temper, I promoted to be my hunting-mule, was a short, stumpy animal, with a very large head and long flapping ears. Many a deer and antelope I killed off her back; and, when hunting, I had only to dismount and throw down the lariat on the ground, and she would remain motionless for hours until I returned. These mules became so attached to my horse Panchito, that it was nearly impossible to separate them; and they would follow me like dogs when mounted on his back. They both crossed the grand prairies with me to the Missouri; and when compelled to part them from poor Panchito, I thought their hearts would have broken.

In the meson of Silao we were literally besieged by representatives from every shop in the town, who poured upon us, offering their wares for sale, and every imaginable article required for "the road." This is the custom in all the towns, and shows the scarcity of regular custom. No sooner does a stranger enter a meson than to it flock venders of saddles, bridles, bits, spurs, whips, alforjas, sarapes for yourself, rebosos for your ladye-love, sashes, sombreros, boots, silks, and velvets (cotton), and goods of every kind that the town affords. Besides these, Indian women and girls arrive with baskets of fruit—oranges, lemons, grapes, chirimoyas, batatas, platanos, plantains, camotes, granaditas, mamayes, tunas, pears, apples, and fruit of every description. Pulque and colinche sellers are not wanting, all extolling their goods and pressing them on the unfortunate traveller at the same moment, while leperos whine and pray for alms, and lavanderas for your clothes to wash, the whole uniting in such a Babel-like din as outbeggars description. Rid yourself of these, and gangs of a more respectable class throng the door for the express purpose of staring; and this is a most ill-bred characteristic of Mexican manners, and one of the greatest of the many annoyances which beset a traveller. Silao is notorious for its population of thieves and robbers, who, it is the boast of the place, are unequalled in audacity as well as dexterity. I saw a striking instance of this. A man entered the corral of the meson, and unblushingly offered for sale a pair of wax candles which he had just stolen from a church, boasting of the deed to his worthy companions, who quite approved the feat.

Silao is on the borders of the departments of Guanaxuato and Jalisco, and contains about 5000 inhabitants. The plains in the vicinity produce abundantly wheat, maize, frijoles, barley, &c., and the soil is admirably adapted for the growth of cotton, tobacco, and cochineal.

We were now perceptibly, but very gradually, decreasing our elevation, and the increased temperature was daily becoming more manifest. Jalisco, which we were now entering, belongs to the tierra caliente, where all tropical productions *might* be cultivated, but are not. It is on the western declivity of the Cordillera of Anahuac, which may be said to connect the Andes of South and Central America with the great chain of the Rocky Mountains. Jalisco has equal if not greater advantages, in point of soil, climate, and communication with the coast, than any other section of Mexico. The table-land on the western ridge of the Cordillera is exceedingly fertile and enjoys a temperate climate. Here are situated the populous towns of Silao, Leon, Lagos, and Aguas Calientes, in the midst of a most productive champaign. The central portion, of a less elevation and consequently more tropical temperature, which produces cotton, cochineal, and vanilla, as well as every variety of cereal produce, contains a population for the most part engaged in mines and manufactures. This port has a communication with the Pacific coast by means of the Rio de Santiago or Tololotlan, which flows from the great lake of Chapala, and on which the important city of Guadalaxara is situated, with a population of 23,000 or 25,000. The regions near the coast are teeming with fertility, and covered with magnificent forests; but unfortunately the vomito here holds its dreaded sway, and the climate is fatal to strangers, and indeed to the inhabitants themselves.

22nd.—From Silao to La Villa de Leon the eye looks in vain for signs of cultivation. On these vast plains day after day we meet no other travellers than the arrieros with their atajos of mules from Durango, Zacatecas, and Fresnillo. These picturesque cavalcades we always hailed with pleasure, as they were generally the bearers of news, *novedades*, from Durango, of Indian attacks and of bands of robbers they had met on the road, which intelligence always put us on the *qui vive*, and made our mozos look very blue. Leon is own brother to Silao, and rivals that town in its celebrity as being prolific in robbers and assassins. Grain of every kind is here very abundant and of excellent quality.

I had a little affair at Leon which was nearly proving disagreeable to me, and I have no doubt was anything but pleasant to one of the parties concerned. I had been strolling about nine o'clock in the evening through the plaza, which at that time presents a lively scene, the stalls of the market-people being lighted by fires which are made for that purpose in the square, and which throw their flickering light on the picturesque dresses of the peasantry who attend the market as buyers or sellers, and the still more lively garb of the idle loungers who, wrapped in showy sarapes and cigarros in mouth, loaf at that hour along the streets. Returning from the plaza through a dark narrow street, I was detected as a stranger by a knot of idle rascals standing at the door of a pulque-shop, who immediately saluted me with cries of "Texano, Texano, que meura," —let's kill him, the Yankee dog. Wishing to avoid a rencontre with such odds, and with no other means of defence than a bowie-knife, I thought on this occasion that discretion would be much the better part of valour, so I turned off into another dark street, but was instantly pursued by the crowd, who followed yelling at my heels. Luckily an opportune and dark doorway offered me a shelter, and I crouched in it as my pursuers passed with loud cries and knives in hand. The instant that they all, as I imagined, had passed me, I emerged from my hiding-place, and ran almost into the very arms of three who were bringing up the rear. "Hi esta, hi esta!" they shouted, baring their knives and rushing at me. "Maten le, maten le!" —here he is, here he is: kill him, kill the jackass. The darkness was in my favour. As the foremost one rushed at me with uplifted blade I stepped quickly to one side, and at the same moment thrust at him with my knife. He stumbled forward on his knees with a cry of "Dios! me ha matado"—he has killed me—and fell on his face. One of the remaining two ran to his assistance, the other made towards me; but, finding that I was inclined to compare notes with him and waited his attack, he slackened his pace and declined the encounter. I returned to the meson, and, without telling the Spaniard what had occurred, gave directions for the animals to be ready at midnight, and shortly after we were in the saddle and on our road.

23rd.—From Leon the road ascends a sierra, from the top of which is a magnificent view of the plains of Silao. The mule-path by which we descended is rough and dangerous, and we had to wait on the summit of the sierra until day dawned before we could with safety undertake the descent. The whole country exhibits traces of a volcanic origin; pumice and lava strew the ground, and the sierras are broken into tabular masses of a singular regularity of outline. One isolated mountain rises abruptly from the plain, and resembles the [illegible]e-mountain of the Cape of Good Hope in the general form and regularity of its summit. This tabular form is a characteristic feature in the landscape of these volcanic regions: it is called *mesa*, table, by the Mexicans. Lagos lies at the foot of another sierra, with a lake in the distance, and seen from this elevation the prospect is very beautiful. Far from any habitation, we came upon an old woman sitting under a rock by the roadside, with numerous ollas simmering in the ashes of a fire, containing frijoles and chile, and here we stopped for our usual breakfast.

It was a "dia de fiesta," and when we entered Lagos we found the population in great excitement, as on the morrow a "funcion de toros," a bull-fight, was to take place, and the "feria," annual fair, commenced that very night.

The rancheros with their wives and daughters were pouring into the town from far and near, and we had met on the road many families on their way to the fair, forming a very picturesque cavalcade. First the ranchero himself, the pater familias, in glossy sombrero with its gold or silver rolls, calzoneras glittering with many buttons, and snow-white drawers of Turkish dimensions, mounted on a showy horse gaily caparisoned, and bearing on its croup the smiling, smirking dame in span-new reboso and red or yellow enagua. Next a horse-load or two of muchachitas, their brown faces peeping from the reboso, showing their black eyes and white teeth, as, shining with anticipated delight of the morrow's festivities, and in a state of perfect happiness and enjoyment, they return their acknowledgments to the compliments of the passing caballeros. These, in all the glory of Mexican dandyism, armed with scopeta and machete (sword), and the ever-ready lasso hanging from the saddle-bow, escorted the party, caracolling along on their prancing steeds.

The diques—streams which run through the streets—were full of women and girls undergoing preparatory ablution, and dressing their long black hair with various unguents at the side of the water. Pedlers were passing from house to house offering for sale gaudy ornaments to the women, earrings of gold and silver and coloured glass, beads of coral and shell from California, amulets and love-charms from the capital, indulgences for peccadilloes committed on the morrow, and suitable for the occasion, the which were in great demand.

In the plaza were numerous gambling-booths, where banks of gold, silver, and copper suited the pockets of every class. Here resorted the wealthy haciendado with his rouleaus of *onzas*, the ranchero with his silver *pesos*, and the lepero with his copper *clacos*. In one of a middle class, where pesetas were the lowest stake, were congregated a mixture of all classes. The table covered with green cloth displayed tempting lines of gold and silver, surrounded by eager faces. Six women at one end of the room were singing national songs, and occasionally a winner threw them a silver coin, or a loser, for good luck, chucked a peseta over his shoulder to the same destination. Some of the airs were very pretty, although the words were generally pure nonsense. A song which described the courtship of a Mexican beauty by a soldier of Guadalaxara was repeatedly encored. Its chorus was the concluding words of the indignant beauty to the presumptuous suitor, and his meek reply:—

"Soy Mejicana
De este pais.
Yo, un soldado
Soy infeliz."

"A Mexican girl
Of this country am I.
And I a poor soldier,—
Woe is me!"

In conclusion, after the aspiring muchacha had run through a long list of the sacrifices she would make if she listened to the suit of the poor soldier, the lover draws a glowing picture of the delights of a barrack life, the constant change of scene, and its advantages over the monotonous existence of a rancheria. He offers her rebosos of Puebla and enaguas of Potosi, the most retired corner in the quartel, and assures her that all his "bona robas" shall be discarded for her sake. This part put me in mind of the beautiful ballad of Zorilla, in which the Moorish knight woos the Christian lady with glowing descriptions of the presents he would make her, of his castle in Granada, with its beautiful gardens, &c.:—

"Y si mi Sultana eres,
Que desiertos mis salones,
Esta mi harem sin mugeres,
Mis oidos sin canciones.
Yo te daré terciopelos,
Y perfumes orientales.
De Grecia te traeré velos,
De Cachemira chales.
Y te daré blancas plumas
Para que adornes tu frente,
Mas blancas que las espumas
De nuestro mar del oriente.

Y perlas para el cabello;
Y baños para el calor;
Collares para el cuello,
Por tus labios: AMOR."

and describes his brown fortress in the plains of Xenil, which will be queen amongst a thousand when it encloses the beautiful Christian:—

"Que será reina entre mil,
Cuando encierre tu belleza."

But with the Mexican muchacha, as with the Christian lady, the rebosos of Puebla, the enaguas of Potosi, or even the retired corner in the barrack-room, have as little effect as the velvets and perfumes of the East, the veils brought from Greece, the Cashmere shawls, and the grey fortress in Grenada, had with the fair lady, who valued more her towers of Leon than the Moor's Grenada:—

"Que mis torres de Leon
Valen mas que tu Grenada."

"My Leon towers I doubly prize,
Than all the plains of thy Grenada."

24th.—We left Lagos for La Villa de la Encarnacion, through a barren and uninteresting country, destitute of trees, and the vegetation sparse and burned up. The road was up and down sierras the whole day, scattered with nopalo and prickly pear; the heat tremendous, and the sun's rays, reverberated from the rocky sierra, fiery and scorching. We crossed a river which washes the walls of the town, by a ford on the right of a ruined bridge, destroyed during the War of Independence, and never rebuilt. This town was the first I saw in which all the houses were of adobes (sunburnt bricks). It exactly resembled the sketch of Timbuctoo as given in René Caillé's book, and its appearance, as might be expected, was miserable in the extreme. As we passed the quaint-looking church, with its bells swung high in air, the organ was playing a crashing polka—a funcion at the time being in progress inside, and groups of leperos kneeling in the enclosed space in front.

Amongst the beggars, who as usual attended our levee on arrival, was a lepero without even the rudiments of legs, who dragged himself along the ground on his stomach like a serpent, and had a breastplate of leather for the purpose of protecting his body from the rough stones over which he crawled. This disgusting wretch took up his position in the corral, and, as it cost him no little labour to crawl thus far, seemed determined to sicken us out of a coin. The night was so hot and close that I placed my blanket in the balcon which ran round the rooms, which in this meson were above the stables, and ascended by wooden steps. Being very tired, I had turned in early, and was in a pleasant doze, when I imagined I heard a dog which belonged to my companion, and which had on leathern shoes to protect its feet, scraping or scratching near me. Thinking the animal, which was a great favourite, wanted to lie down on my blanket, I called to it to come and lie down, saying, "Ven aca, povrecito, ven aca" (Come here, poor fellow, come here). I immediately felt something at my side, and, lazily opening my eyes, what was my intense horror and disgust at seeing the legless lepero crawling on my bed! Human nature could not stand it. "Maldito!" I roared out, "afuera!" and, gathering up my leg, kicked him from me. I did not recover from my disgust until I saw the wretch crawling across the corral and out of the gate. He had come to beg or steal; and, of course imagining from my words that I was charitably inviting him to share my blanket, was thus unceremoniously ejected from the balcony.*

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* From Lagos to La Encarnacion, forty miles.

CHAPTER XI.

To Aguas Calientes—Meet a Pic-nic Party—Gallantry of the Caballeros—They beat a Retreat—Aguas Calientes—Patriotic Column—Hacienda of La Punta—Plains of La Punta—Picos Largos—Horse died from Fatigue—To Zacatecas—Abandoned Copper-mines—Indian Treasure-hunter—Zacatecas—Mines—Deposits of Soda—Novedades—Los Indios—Zacatecas to Fresnillo—Audacity of Robbers—Fresnillo—Its Mines—Government Greediness—Hacienda de Beneficios—Employés of the Mines, &c.—A Mexican Trader—Fresnillo to Zaina—Indian District—Fortified Haciendas—A "Spill"—Zaina—Sombrerete—Wild Country—The Mal Pais, or Volcanic Region—Wild Scenery—Bad Roads—The Hacienda of San Nicolas—Enormous Estates—Frighten the Ladies—Volcanic Formations—Molten Lava—La Punta—Indian Road—Massacre of the Rancheros—The Ranchera's Story—The National Game of Coléa de Toros—Bull Tailing—The Game of the Cock—Poverty of the Rancho—Road to Durango—Inundated Plains—Gruyas and Wild Geese—Arrive at Durango—Mountain of Malleable Iron—&c.

25th.—To Aguas Calientes, a very pretty town, with some handsome buildings. We met a gipsying or pic-nic party on the road, mounted on borricos, with a mule packed with comestibles. A bevy of very pretty girls brought up the rear, under the escort of half-a-dozen exquisites of the town, got up in the latest fashion of the capital. Their monopoly of such a fair troop was not to be borne, and with tolerable impudence we stopped the party. The dandies, from our sunburnt and road-stained appearance and bristling arms, at once set us down as robbers, and without more ado turned their donkeys and retreated, leaving us masters of the field and the fair. With them our peace was soon made, and we received a pressing invitation to join the party, which, however, we were fain to decline, as our horses were sorely tired. They laughed heartily at the panic of their gallant escort, who were huddled together at a little distance, not knowing whether to advance or retreat. I sent my mozo to them to say that the ladies required their presence; and we rode on to the town, where we found our mulada arrived and waiting our approach.

In Aguas Calientes I was accosted by a negro, a runaway slave from the United States. He informed me he was cook at the house where the diligencia stopped, and that if I chose he would prepare a dinner for us,—roast-beef, &c., and all the "fixings" of an American feed. I gladly made the bargain, and proceeded to the house at the time appointed, but found the rascal had never been there, and dinner there was none.

In the plaza is a column erected to some patriot or another, which is pointed out to the stranger as being *muy fino*. The pedestal is surmounted by geese with long claws like an eagle's, and hairy heads of dogs stick out of the sides. The most absurd thing I ever saw.

25th.—To the hacienda of La Punta, in a large plain where are several other plantations, and two rancherias celebrated as being the abode of a band of robbers called "picos largos," long-bills. In this day's journey of forty miles one of the horses died from fatigue and heat, and two others were scarcely able to finish the day's journey.

26th.—To Zacatecas, through wild uncultivated plains and sierras. On the road we passed some abandoned copper-mines, where an old Indian was picking for stray pieces of ore, of which a dream had promised the discovery.

ZACATECAS, a populous city of between 30,000 and 40,000 inhabitants, is in the midst of one of the most valuable mining districts in Mexico. The country round it is wild and barren, but the rugged sierras teem with the precious metals. Near the town are several lakes or lagunes, which abound in muriate and carbonate of soda. The town itself is mean and badly built, the streets narrow and dirty, and the population bear a very bad character; which indeed is the case in all the mining-towns in the country, which is but natural from the very nature of their employment.*

From this point the "novedades" poured upon us daily: "Los Indios! los Indios!" was the theme of every conversation. Thus early (it was a very early Indian season this year and the last) they had made their appearance in the immediate vicinity of Durango, killing the paisanos, and laying waste the haciendas and ranchos; and it was supposed they would penetrate even farther into the interior. What a "cosa de Mejico" is this fact! Five hundred savages depopulating a *soi-disant* civilised country, and with impunity!

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* From Hacienda de la Punta to Zacatecas, fifty miles.

27*th*.—The road from Zacatecas to Fresnillo lies through a wild uncultivated country without inhabitants. We met a *conducta* from the mines of Fresnillo, bearing bars of silver to the mint at Zacatecas. The waggon in which it was carried was drawn by six mules galloping at their utmost speed. Eight or ten men, with muskets between their knees, sat in the waggon, facing outwards, and as many more galloped alongside, armed to the teeth. Bands of robbers, three or four hundred strong, have been known to attack conductas from the mines, even when escorted by soldiers, engaging them in a regular stand-up fight.

Fresnillo is a paltry dirty town, with the neighbouring sierra honeycombed with mines, which are rich and yield considerable profits. A share which the government had in these mines yielded an annual revenue of nearly half a million of dollars; but that short-sighted vampire, which sucks the blood of poor Mexico, eager to possess all the golden eggs at once, sold its interest for less than one year's income. Cosa de Mejico, here as everywhere!

We were here very kindly invited to take up our abode, during our stay, in the hacienda of the mines; the administrador of which is an American, and the officers mostly Spaniards. Enjoying their hospitality, we spent two or three days very pleasantly, and were initiated into all the mysteries of mining. The process of extracting the metal from the ore is curious in the extreme, but its description would require more science than I possess, and more space than I am able to afford. Two thousand mules are at daily work in the *hacienda de beneficios*, and 2500 men are employed in the mines. From this an idea may be formed of the magnitude of the works. The main shaft is 1200 feet in depth, and a huge engine is constantly employed removing water from the mines. This vast mass of machinery appeared to take care of itself, for I saw neither engineers nor others in the engine-house. There are many Cornishmen employed in the mines, who drink and fight considerably, but withal find time to perform double as much work as the Mexicans. The patio or yard of the hacienda de beneficios, where the porphyritic crushing-mills are at work, contains 32,000 square yards. In undergoing one process, the crushed ore, mixed with copper and salt, is made into enormous mud puddings, and trodden out by mules, which are back deep in the paste; indeed, the whole process of the beneficio, a purely chemical one, is most curious and worthy of attention.

The miners are a most dissolute and vicious class of men, and frequently give great trouble to the officers of the hacienda. But for the firmness and presence of mind of the administrador, the American gentleman before alluded to, the miners on more than one occasion would probably have sacked the hacienda.

The Cornishmen, however, can always be relied on, their only fault being the love of fighting and whisky; and a dépôt of arms is kept in the hacienda ready for any emergency.

On a bare rock, which was entirely destitute of soil, the miners have formed a most beautiful and productive garden, the soil with which it is made having been conveyed to the spot on the backs of mules and donkeys; it is now luxuriant and thriving, although, I believe, but two years old, and is full of fruit-bearing trees of every description. In the centre is a fountain and ornamental summer-house, and, curiously enough, this garden is the resort of flocks of humming-birds, which are but rarely found on the neighbouring plains.

On the road between Zacatecas and Fresnillo, as I was jogging gently on, a Mexican mounted on a handsome horse dashed up and reined in suddenly, doffing his sombrero and saluting me with a "*Buenos dias, caballero.*" He had ridden from Zacatecas for the purpose of trading with me for my sword, which he said he had heard of in that town as being something *muy fino.* Riding up to my left side, and saying, "*Con su licencia, caballero*" —by your leave, my lord—he drew the sword from its scabbard, and, flourishing it over his head, executed a neat demivolte to one side, and performed some most complicated manœuvres. At first I thought it not unlikely that my friend might take it into his head to make off with the sword, as his fresh and powerful animal could easily have distanced my poor tired steed, so I just slipped the cover from the lock of my carbine, to be ready in case of need. But the Mexican, after concluding his exercise, and having tried the temper of the blade on a nepalo, rode up and returned the sword to its scabbard with a low bow, offering me at the same time his horse in exchange for it, and, when that was of no avail, another and another; horses, he assured me, "de la mejor sangre"—of the best blood of the country, and of great speed and strength.

On the 30th we left Fresnillo, having a journey of fifty-five miles before us to Zaina. The country is desolate and totally uncultivated, excepting here and there where a solitary hacienda or rancho is seen; these are all fortified, for we were now entering the districts which are annually laid waste by the Comanches. The haciendas are all surrounded by walls, and flanked with towers loopholed for musketry. A man is always stationed on an eminence in the vicinity, mounted on a fleet horse, on the look-out for Indians; and on their approach a signal is given, and the peones, the labourers employed in the milpas, run with their families to the hacienda, and the gates are then closed and preparations made for defence.

This morning I gave my horse Panchito a run, *suelto*, amongst the mules and loose animals, mounting *Bayou Lobo*, the tierra caliente horse which gave my mozo so severe a fall the day we left the capital. I had dismounted to tighten the girths a short time after leaving Fresnillo, and before daylight, when, on remounting, the animal as usual set off full gallop, and, being almost imprisoned in my sarape, which confined my arms and legs, in endeavouring to throw my right leg over the saddle I pitched over on the other side and fell upon the top of my head, at the same moment that the horse kicked out and struck with great force on my left ear. I lay in the road several hours perfectly insensible; my servant imagined I was dead, and, dragging me on one side, rode on to overtake the Spaniard. However, showing signs of life, they placed me again in the saddle, and I rode on for several hours in a state of unconsciousness. My jaw was knocked on one side, and when I recovered I had hard work to pull it into its former position: for days, however, I was unable to open it further than to admit a fork or a spoon; and as I had to ride forty-five miles the same day that I met with the accident, and under a burning sun, I thought myself fortunate in not being disabled altogether.

Zaina is a very pretty little town surrounded with beautiful gardens. It is an isolated spot, and has little or no communication with other towns.

Oct. 1*st.*—To Sombrerete, distance thirty-four miles. The country became wilder, with less fertile soil, and entirely depopulated, as much from fear of Indians as from its natural unproductiveness. Sombrerete was once a mining-place of some importance, and the *Casa de la Diputacion de Mineria,* a large handsome building, is conspicuous in the town. The sierra is still worked, but the veins are not productive. The *veta negra de Sombrerete,* the famous black vein of Sombrerete, yielded the greatest *bonanzas** of any mine on the continent of America. It is now exhausted.

2*nd.*—We left the usual road, and struck across the country to the hacienda de San Nicolas, as I was desirous of passing through the tract of country known as the *Mal Pais,* a most interesting volcanic region, a perfect terra incognita even to Mexicans; and as to travellers, such raræ aves are as little known in these parts as in Timbuctoo. We journeyed through a perfect wilderness of sierra, and chapparal thickly covered with nopalos and mezquite, which now became the characteristic tree. The high rank grass was up to our horses' bellies, and, matted with the bushes of mezquite and prickly pear, was difficult to make our way through. Hares and rabbits, and *javali,* a species of wild hog, abounded, with quail and partridge, and many varieties of pigeons and doves. We passed on our left hand a curiously formed ridge, and a pyramidal hill which stood isolated in the plain, such as the ancient Mexicans made use of as pedestals for their temples, and which have been ingeniously described as artificial structures by writers on Mexican antiquities. This day's journey was long and fatiguing, as we had to make our way for the most part across a trackless country, striking a mule-path only within about fifteen miles of the hacienda. Our animals were completely exhausted when we reached it, having performed nearly sixty miles during the day.

The *hacienda de San Nicolas* is one of those enormous estates which abound in every part of Mexico, and which sometimes contain sixty and eighty square miles of land. Of course not a hundredth part is under cultivation; but on some, immense herds of horses, mules, and cattle roam almost wild, or rather *did* roam, for the Indians have carried off incredible numbers. The hacienda itself is generally surrounded by the huts of the peones. The labourers who are employed on the plantation exist in a kind of serfdom to the owners, and their collection of adobe hovels forms almost a town of itself. The *haciendados* live in almost feudal state, having their hundreds of retainers, and their houses fortified to repel the attacks of Indians or other enemies.

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* When a rich vein or lode is struck in a mine yielding a large quantity of ore, such a fortunate event is termed "bonanza."

On riding up to the gate of the hacienda we surprised two of the señoritas in dishabille, smoking their cigarros of *hoja*—corn-shucks—on a stone bench in front of the house; they instantly ran off like startled hares, so unexpected was the apparition of strange caballeros with a retinue of mozos, and, banging to the gate, reconnoitred us through the chinks. Nothing would induce them to reappear, so we withdrew, and sent one of the mozos on the forlorn hope of procuring admittance. With him they parleyed through the gate, and informed us, through him, that, as their padre was from home, they were unable to receive us within the castle, but that a stable was *à la disposicion de los caballeros*, and a *quarto*, used sometimes as a hen-house, and at others as a calf-pen, should be cleaned for their reception. With this we were fain to be content, and, as there was ample provision for our tired beasts, and a good corral, had no reason to complain, as sleeping in the air was no hardship in this climate.

Presently, with the compliments of the ladies, an excellent supper made its appearance, comprising a guisado of hare, frijoles, eggs, &c., and a delicious salad prepared by the fair hands of the señoritas, and their regrets at the same time that the absence of their señor prevented them from having the pleasure of affording better accommodation.

3rd.—Our road lay through the Mal Pais—the evil land (as volcanic regions are called by the Mexicans), which has the appearance of having been, at a comparatively recent period, the theatre of volcanic convulsions of an extraordinary nature. The convexity of the disturbed region enables one to judge of the extent of the convulsion, which reaches from the central crater to a distance of twelve or fourteen miles.

The valley between two ridges or sierras is completely filled up to nearly a level with the sierra itself; it is therefore impossible to judge of the height of the tract of ground raised by the volcano. The crater is about five or six hundred yards in circumference, and filled with a species of dwarf oak, mezquite, and cocoa trees, which grow out of the crevices of the lava. In it is a small stagnant lake, the water of which is green and brackish; huge blocks of lava and scoria surround the lake, which is fringed with rank shrubs and cactus. It is a dismal, lonely spot, and the ground rumbles under the tread of the passing horse. A large crane stood with upraised leg on a rock in the pool, and a *javali* was wallowing near it in the mud. Not a breath of air ruffled the inky surface of the lake, which lay as undisturbed as a sheet of glass, save where here and there a huge water-snake glided across with uplifted head, or a duck swam slowly out from the shadow of the shrub-covered margin, followed by its downy progeny.

I led my horse down to the edge of the water, but he refused to drink the slimy liquid, in which frogs, efts, and reptiles of every kind were darting and diving. Many new and curious water-plants floated near the margin, and one, lotus-leaved, with small delicate tendrils, formed a kind of net-work on the water, with a superb crimson flower, which exhibited a beautiful contrast with the inky blackness of the pool. The Mexicans, as they passed this spot, crossed themselves reverently, and muttered an Ave Maria; for in the lonely regions of the Mal Pais, the superstitious Indian believes that demons and gnomes, and spirits of evil purposes have their dwelling-places, whence they not unfrequently pounce upon the solitary traveller, and bear him into the cavernous bowels of the earth; the arched roof of the prison-house resounding to the tread of their horses as they pass the dreaded spot, muttering rapidly their prayers, and handling their amulets and charms to keep off the treacherous bogles who invisibly beset the path.

The surrounding country is curiously disturbed, and the flow of the molten lava can easily be traced, with its undulations, and even retaining the exact form of the ripple as it flowed down from the crater. Hollow cones appear at intervals like gigantic petrified bubbles, and extend far into the plain. Some of these, in shape like an inverted cup, are rent, and present large fissures, while others are broken in two, one half only remaining, which exhibit the thickness of the shell of basaltic lava to be only from one to three feet.

We arrived at the rancho of La Punta in the afternoon, in time to witness the truly national sport of the *coléa de toros*—in English, bull-tailing—for which some two or three hundred rancheros were assembled from the neighbouring plantations.

This rancho, in the fall of last year, was visited by the Comanches, who killed several of the unfortunate peones, whom they caught in the road and at work in the milpas, and carried off all the stock belonging to the farm. On the spot where the rancheros were killed and scalped, crosses are erected, and the little piles of stones, which almost bury them, testify to the numerous Ave Marias and Pater Nosters which their friends have uttered when passing, in prayer for their souls in purgatory, and for each prayer have deposited at the foot of the cross the customary stone.

Without warning, the Indians one day suddenly appeared on the sierra, and swooped down upon the rancho. The men immediately fled and concealed themselves, leaving the women and children to their fate. Those who were not carried away were violated, and some pierced with arrows and lances and left for dead. The ranchero's wife described to me the whole scene, and bitterly accused the men of cowardice in not defending the place. This woman, with two grown daughters and several smaller children, fled from the rancho before the Indians approached, and concealed themselves under a wooden bridge which crossed a stream near at hand. Here they remained for some hours, half dead with terror: presently some Indians approached their place of concealment: a young chief stood on the bridge and spoke some words to the others. All this time he had his piercing eyes bent upon their hiding-place, and had no doubt discovered them, but concealed his satisfaction under an appearance of indifference. He played with his victims. In broken Spanish they heard him express his hope "that he would be able to discover where the women were concealed—that he wanted a Mexican wife and some scalps." Suddenly he jumped from the bridge and thrust his lance under it with a savage whoop; the blade pierced the woman's arm and she shrieked with pain. One by one they were drawn from their retreat.

"Dios de mi alma!"—what a moment was this!—said the poor creature. Her children were surrounded by the savages, brandishing their tomahawks, and she thought their last hour was come. But they all escaped with life, and returned to find their house plundered, and the corses of friends and relations strewing the ground.

"Ay de mi!"—what a day was this! "Y los hombres," she continued, "qui no son hombres?"—And the men—who are *not* men—where were they? "*Escondidos como los ratones*"—hidden in holes like the rats. "*Mire!*" she said, suddenly, and with great excitement: "look at these two hundred men, well mounted and armed, who are now so brave and fierce, running after the poor bulls; if twenty Indians were to make their appearance, where would they be? Vaya, vaya!" she exclaimed; "son cobardes"—they are cowards all of them.

The daughter, who sat at her mother's feet during the recital, as the scenes of that day were recalled to her memory, buried her face in her mother's lap, and wept with excitement.

To return to the toros. In a large corral, at one end of which was a little building, erected for the accommodation of the lady spectators, were enclosed upwards of a hundred bulls. Round the corral were the horsemen, all dressed in the picturesque Mexican costume, examining the animals as they were driven to and fro in the enclosure, in order to make them wild for the sport—*alzar el corage.* The ranchero himself, and his sons, were riding amongst them, armed with long lances, separating from the herd, and driving into another enclosure, the most active bulls. When all was ready, the bars were withdrawn from the entrance of the corral, and a bull driven out, who, seeing the wide level plain before him, dashed off at the top of his speed. With a shout, the horsemen pursued the flying animal, who, hearing the uproar behind him, redoubled his speed. Each urges his horse to the utmost, and strives to take the lead and be the first to reach the bull. In such a crowd, of course, first-rate horsemanship is required to avoid accidents and secure a safe lead. For some minutes the troop ran on in a compact mass—a sheet could have covered the lot. Enveloped in a cloud of dust, nothing could be seen but the bull, some hundred yards ahead, and the rolling cloud. Presently, with a shout, a horseman emerged from the front rank; the women cried "viva!" as, passing close to the stage, he was recognised to be the son of the ranchera, a boy of twelve years of age, sitting his horse like a bird, and swaying from side to side as the bull doubled, and the cloud of dust concealed the animal from his view. "Viva Pepito! viva!" shouted his mother, as she waved her reboso, to encourage the boy; and the little fellow struck his spurs into his horse, and doubled down to his work manfully. But now two others are running neck and neck with him, and the race for the lead, and the first throw, is most exciting. The men shout, the women wave their rebosos, and cry out their names: "Alza—Bernardo—por mi amor, Juan Maria—Viva Pepitito!" they scream in intense excitement. The boy at length loses the lead to a tall fine-looking Mexican, mounted on a fleet and powerful roan stallion, who gradually, but surely, forges ahead. At this moment the sharp eyes of little Pepe observed the bull to turn at an angle from his former course, which movement was hidden by the dust from the leading horseman. In an instant the boy took advantage of it, and, wheeling his horse at a right angle from his original course, cut off the bull. Shouts and vivas rent the air at sight of this skilful manœuvre, and the boy, urging his horse with whip and spur, ranged up to the left quarter of the bull, bending down to seize the tail, and secure it under his right leg, for the purpose of throwing the animal to the ground. But here Pepe's strength failed him in a feat which requires great power of muscle, and in endeavouring to perform it he was jerked out of his saddle, and fell violently to the ground, stunned and senseless. At least a dozen horsemen were now striving hard for the post of honour, but the roan distanced them all, and its rider, stronger than Pepe, dashed up to the bull, threw his right leg over the tail, which he had seized in his right hand, and, wheeling his horse suddenly outwards, upset the bull in the midst of his career, and the huge animal rolled over and over in the dust, bellowing with pain and fright.

This exciting but dangerous sport exhibits the perfect horsemanship of the Mexicans to great advantage. Their firm yet graceful seat excels everything I have seen in the shape of riding, and the perfect command which they have over their horses renders them almost a part of the animals they ride. Their seat is quite different from the "park-riding" of Mexico. The sport of coléa lasts as long as a bull remains in the corral, so that at the conclusion, as may be imagined, the horses are perfectly exhausted.

Another equestrian game is "el gallo"—the cock. In this cruel sport, an unfortunate rooster is tied by the legs to a tree, or to a picket driven in the ground, with its head or neck well greased. The horsemen, starting together, strive to be the first to reach the bird, and, seizing it by the neck, to burst the thongs which secure it, and ride off with the prize. The well-greased neck generally slips through the fingers of the first who lay hold of it; but, as soon as one is in possession, he rides off, pursued by the rest, whose object is to rescue the fowl. Of course in the contest which ensues the poor bird is torn to pieces; the scraps of the body being presented by the fortunate possessors as a *gâge d'amour* to their mistresses.

The people in the rancho were so poor in comestibles, that we supped that night on beans and bread, and made our beds afterwards outside the door, where all night long continued such a clatter of women's tongues, such grunting of pigs, barking of curs, braying of borricos, &c., that I was unable to sleep until near morning, when, before daylight, we were again in our saddles.

Oct. 4th.—At daybreak we came to a river, which, in the absence of a ferry, we swam with all our animals, both packed and loose. We passed through a flat country, entirely inundated, and alive with geese and gruyas. The latter bird, of the crane species, is a characteristic feature in the landscape of this part of Mexico. The corn-fields are visited by large flocks, and, as they fly high in the air, their peculiar melancholy note is constantly heard, both in the day and night, booming over the plains.

DURANGO, the metropolis of northern Mexico, is situated near the root of the Sierra Madre, at the north-western corner of a large plain, poorly cultivated and sparsedly inhabited. It is a picturesque city, with two or three large churches and some government buildings "fair to the eye but foul within," with a population of 18,000, 17,000 of whom are rogues and rascals. Like all other Mexican cities, it is extremely dirty in the exterior, but the houses are clean and tidy within, always excepting government buildings. It is celebrated for its scorpions and bad pulque, and the enormous mass of malleable iron which rises isolated in the plain, about three miles from the town. This rock is supposed to be an aërolite, as its composition and physical character are identical with certain aërolites which fell in 1751 in some part of Hungary, and analogous to the general character of others of the same nature, of which the aërolitic origin is equally certain and authenticated. It contains 75 per cent. of pure iron, according to the analysis of a Mexican chemist; and some specimens, which Humboldt procured, were analysed by the celebrated Klaproth, with, I believe, the same result.

Durango is distant from the city of Mexico 500 miles in a due course, or as the bird flies, but by the road must be upwards of 650; my reckoning makes it 665—many miles, I have no doubt, too much or too little. Its elevation, according to Humboldt, is 6845 feet above the level of the sea, while that of Mexico is 7470, and La Villa de Leon 6027 feet; thus showing that the table-land of Mexico does not decline so suddenly as is imagined. Indeed, excepting in the plains of Salamanca and Silao, there is no perceptible difference in the temperature, and I believe, in reality, but little of elevation, in the vast region between the capital and Chihuahua.

Snow falls here occasionally, and the mercury is sometimes seen below the freezing point. For the greater part of the year, however, the heat is excessive, when a low intermittent fever is prevalent, but rarely fatal.

Durango is the seat of a bishopric, and the worthy prelate lately undertook a journey to Santa Fé, in New Mexico, which progress created a furore amongst the devout; and the good old man was glad to return with any hem to his garment, so great was the respect paid to him. That he escaped the Apaches and Comanches is attributed to a miracle: the unfaithful assign the glory to his numerous escort.—Quien sabe?

The City of Scorpions (as it is called) was in dread and expectation of an Indian invasion during my stay. Some five hundred Comanches were known to be in the vicinity towards the *north-*

east; so, after a fanfarron of several days, and high mass in the church for the repose of those who were going to be killed, &c., the troops and valientes of the city, with beating drums and flying colours, marched out to the *south-west*, and happened to miss "los barbaros." However, it saved them a sound drubbing, and the country the valientes who would have been killed; so the fatality was not much regretted, at least by the military, and the people by this time are accustomed to these "chances."—Cosas de Mejico.

There is an English merchant in Durango, and one or two Germans and Americans. Their hospitality is unbounded. There is also a mint, the administrador of which is a German gentleman, who has likewise established a cotton-factory near the city, which is a profitable concern: y de mas (and moreover), las Durangüenas son muy halagüenas (the ladies of Durango are very pretty).

I stayed in the house of the widow of a Gachupin, whose motherly kindness to me, and excellent cooking taught her by her defunct sposo, is one of the most pleasurable memorias I bear with me from Mexico, where a bastard and miserable imitation of the inimitable Spanish cuisine exists in all its deformity.

CHAPTER XII.

A Hint to Travellers—Mode of Travelling in Mexico—Roughing it—Dangers of Travelling—Servants—Their Pay—Their Roguery—A Mexican Servant's Account—Ditto "taxed" and "cut down"—Respect to Englishmen—Passports and Letters of Security—Compadres and Commadres.

TRAVELLING in Mexico may be divided into two heads, viz. *en grande* (or *en prince*, as they say in France), or in the style of the *hombre de jaqueta*, which, however, although considered *infra dig.* in Spain, is, as far as the garment is concerned, the only correct costume for the road in Mexico. The wealthy haciendado of the *tierra caliente* rolls along in his *carretela* drawn by half a dozen mules, his lady in more luxurious *littera*, while the gentlemen and *solteros* of the family—the bachelors—prance at the sides of the litter, mounted on their Puebla hacks, and arrayed in all the glory of buttons and embroidery.

If the object be to see the country, and become acquainted with the people and their manners and customs, the traveller should, in the first place, leave in charge of the steward of the royal mail steam-ship, at Vera Cruz or Tampico, his English reserve and prejudice in the pocket of his Tweed shooting-jacket; all of which, together with his Lincoln and Bennet and cockney notions, he must at once discard before leaving the steamer. Then, having donned a broad-brimmed Panama and white linen roundabout, he may forthwith deliver his letter to his consignee, and make up his mind to the enjoyment of unbounded hospitality for as long as he pleases; and the longer, the better pleased his entertainers: for here, it may be remarked, amongst the foreigners, the most genuine hospitality makes the stranger immediately at home, even in the city of the dreaded vomito.

Here, if he has the good fortune to possess, at the bottom of an introductory epistle, the talismanic "open sesame" of Messrs. Coutts and Co., he will find that he has fallen on his legs indeed;

and at the *casa* of los señores M—— and M—— he will be put in the way of equipping himself for any mode of travelling, whether *por diligencia*, by dilly; *à caballo*, on horseback; or by lazy littera: in which last luxurious conveyance he can travel to Jalapa, and smoke and dream away his time, through the most picturesque scenery of the *tierra caliente*, which, of course, through the pendent curtains, he cannot get a glimpse of.

If, too, Castillo, that prince of mozos, should happen, at the time of his departure, to have an inclination to visit his soft-eyed *Jalapeña*, he may be as lucky as I was in securing his ciceroneship as far as the "City of the Mist;" whence to the capital the coach is the safest and surest mode of transit.

From Mexico to the north, a large escort is necessary to protect the traveller from the exactions of los caballeros del camino—the highwaymen; and if the journey is continued still farther—towards the pole, a respectable force is absolutely indispensable, if he wish to arrive at his journey's end with the hair on the top of his head; for my passage, *sin novedad*, through that turbulous country is to be attributed alone to extraordinary good fortune, and so sharp a look-out as to render the journey anything but a mere pleasure-trip. Indeed, the traveller in any part of Mexico must ever bear in mind the wholesome Yankee saying, "Keep your primin' dry, and your eye skinned." It is not even saying too much to advise those who have never served an apprenticeship of hard knocks, and who would find no little difficulty in adapting their fastidious cuerpos to the rough-and-tumble life they must necessarily lead, to confine their rambles to the well-steamered Rhine, or within the radius of the Messageries Royales and Lafitte's.

It must be some time after the termination of the present war before the country will be fit to travel over; for woe to the luckless wight whose turnip complexion and hair of the carrot's hue proclaim him to be of Anglo-Saxon race, should he fall into the hands of a marauding party of disbanded soldiers! and the present bitter feeling of hostility to foreigners must pass away, before it will be safe to show one's nose outside the gates of the larger cities.

The usual mode of travelling long distances, by even the wealthiest of the male class, is invariably on horse or mule back, several sumpter-mules being packed with the *catre* (bedstead), *alforjas* (saddle-bags), *cantin* (a portable canteen), bed, blankets, provisions, &c.; whilst half a dozen servants—*mozos*—well mounted and armed, escort their lords and masters. The usual pay of these is one dollar a-day each, four shillings and a fraction of our money, with board wages of two rials—*dos riales diarios por la comida*—for which they always stipulate, saying that not even a *lepero* could live for less, a rial being equivalent to about sixpence. One of these is appointed captain, and to him is intrusted the payment of the road expenses, out of which, if he be "*hombre de bien*," *i. e.* an approved rascal, he manages to pouch another daily dollar, as perquisite for the confidence which he is supposed not to abuse.

This capitan, or major-domo, if allowed to rob his master quietly and genteelly, is worthy of every trust, and will take especial care that his privilege is not trespassed upon by others; therefore, says the proverb-loving Mexican, "*Mas vale un ladron que viente picaros*,"—give me one honest robber before twenty rogues; a distinction finely drawn upon the meaning of the terms.

"Que comedor de maiz es aquel macho! valgame Dios, que cabe mas que tres almudas!" "What a corn-eater is that little mule," said my mozo to me one day; "Heaven save me, but he holds three almudas (about six pecks) at a bout! He is the one to eat. Every day he eats the same. Oh! what a macho is that!"

Every traveller has his macho, who eats treble allowance, or rather who eats one ration, while the price of the two imaginary ones finds its way into the pocket of the mozo.

The capitan is also invariably in league with the mesonero of the hostelry where you put up for the night; and his recommendations of extra feeds rouse you, rolled in sarape, as, hat in hand, he stands at the door of the quarto, with mine host looking over his shoulder, saying,—

"Valgame, Don Jorge, que tengan mucha hambre las bestias! ya se acabo la cena: quiere su merced que les echo mas maiz?" —God save me, Mr. George, what hungry bellies the animals have to-night!—they have already gobbled up their suppers: will your worship please that I give them some more corn? "Mañana tenemos jornada muy largita, es preciso que comen bien"—To-morrow we have a long little journey before us, and they had better eat plenty to-night.

"Vaya! maldito," cries the tormented amo; "que comen mil fanegas si pueden!"—Go to the devil, and let them eat a thousand sacks if they can!—and, covering his head with his sarape, soon snores, while his trustworthy mozo puts the price of two almudas in his pocket, and mine host the third for his share of the transaction.

Thus it may be supposed that here the old adage is carried out which says that "*con el ojo del amo se engorda el buey*"—with the master's eye the steer is fattened; and the traveller who loves to see his well-worked animals in good case, and dislikes to draw his pursestrings every three or four days to pay for another and another fresh horse or mule, had better follow my practice, which was to put a puro in my mouth, take up a position on the manger, and watch that every measure was well filled, and eaten, before I paid attention to the wants of my own proper carcase, taking care to give but half the complement of corn at first, reserving the remainder for night, and in the interval seeing that all the beasts were led to water for the second time.

Heaven help the wight who trusts a Mexican! The following is the bill presented to me by my mozo the first and only time I ever trusted him with the office of paymaster; and beneath is the amended or taxed bill, or rather the account of the night's expenditure as wrung from the unwilling mesonero after I had accused my worthy steward of peculation, and threatened summary chastisement. The copy is verbatim:—

"Pago José Maria En el meson De la santisma vergen de guadalaxara Dos dias de comida Para El 4 reales dos Fanegas de mais cuatro Pesos yotras dos 4 pesos entrada de nueve Bestias dos Por una tres Reales tres comidas por mi cabayero dos Pesos por mi cabayero otra 3 Riales tres riales otra otra tres por mi cabayero cinco quartios pulque por mi cabayero paja nueve riales un medio por pulque otro mismo quarto tres dias 6 riales quarto un dia 2 Riales otro 2 otro 2.

todo dies y ocho Pesos.
cinco riales."

Translation.

"Joseph the son of Maria paid in the meson of the holiest virgin of Gua-dalaxara two days board for himself 4 reals two fanegas of corn four Dol-

lars and another 4 dollars entrance of nine Beasts two for one three Rials three dinners for my lord two dollars for my lord another three Rials 3 rials for another for my lord five quarts of pulque for my Lord straw nine rials a medio for pulque another Rial room three days 6 rials room one day 2 Rials other 2 other 2 Total eighteen Dollars five rials. 18p. 5r."

	$	r.
Servant's board for two days	0	4
1½ fanegas of corn	1	2
My Lordship's chocolate and dinners for two days	1	0
Pulque	0	3
Straw for animals	0	4
Hire of room	0	4
Servant's ditto	0	4
	4	5

Showing a difference of fourteen dollars on a bill of four, or eighteen shillings instead of 3*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.* So much for the honesty of "*un hombre de bien*"!

Either from ignorance of their duties or carelessness, Mexican officials seldom trouble the traveller with demanding his passport. It is as well, however, to adhere to the law, and invariably to present it in the larger towns, where it may be presumed the Alcalde can decipher the name and *rubrica* of the "ministro de las relaciones interiores." From the fact of so many English mining companies being dispersed throughout the country, whose wealth and respectable way of doing business are so apparent to the Mexicans, an Englishman is pretty sure to receive attention from the authorities wherever he goes, and a British passport is a sure and certain safeguard from the insolence and rapacity of Jacks-in-office, who have a wholesome dread of the far-reaching power of the "lion and unicorn" which head those vouchsafing documents. A *carta de seguridad*—letter of security—is also indispensable, by which the traveller's transit through the territory of the republic is sanctioned for the space of one year, at the termination of which period it has to be renewed, on presentation to the governor of the state in which he may happen to be. With custom-house regulations there is no inconvenience, a mere form being gone through of opening one package in entering the capitals of the different states, and an opportunely applied dollar will invariably smooth over any difficulty with regard to foreign tobacco, &c., or any of the creature-comforts in the shape of cognac or comestible luxuries, which the traveller will do well to carry with him.

There is one axiom to be never lost sight of in journeying through Mexico. Carry everything with you that you can possibly require on the road, the only limit being the length of your purse, on which will depend your means of conveyance. An European stomach should hardly trust to the country cuisine.

In Northern Mexico and California a custom exists with both sexes of choosing a particular friend, seldom a relation, to whom the person attaches himself in a bond of strict friendship, confiding to his or her care all his hopes and fears, secrets, &c., and seldom severing the tie, which generally binds them together as long as life lasts. The *compadre* and *commadre*—literally godfather, godmother—are consulted on every occasion, when advice on the important subject of love is required, and a nice sense of honour restrains them from all betrayal of trust and confidence. They are likewise inseparable companions, and their purses and property are ever at each other's service. Ask a man to lend you his horse; if not mounted on it himself, the chances are that he answers, "Lo tiene mi compadre"—my godfather has it. It must be confessed, however, that many peccadilloes are fathered on the compadre and commadre. To vouch for the correctness of some story a New Mexican is telling you, he adds, "Pues, si no cree su merced, pregunta a mi compadre"—well, since your worship does not believe it, only ask my godfather.

"Me dixo mi commadre"—my godmother told me so—says a girl to guarantee a bit of scandal. Thus compadres and commadres become a species of Mexican Mrs. Harris, who is appealed to on every occasion, and whose imaginary sagacity, profound wisdom, and personal beauty are on every occasion held up to the admiration of the credulous stranger.

I mention this, here, because it very often happens that when, on hiring a servant, credentials or reference as to his character are demanded of him, he immediately requests you to apply to his compadre, who of course swears that his friend is everything that is good and honest: "Muy buen mozo, y hombre de bien."

CHAPTER XIII.

Comanche Attacks—A Tale of the Indian Frontier—El Coxo and his Sons—Escamilla—Juan Maria—Ysabel de la Cadena—A Jilt—Treachery of Escamilla—Affianced to Ysabel—Arrive at Hacienda for Marriage—Sudden Indian Attack—Cowardice of Escamilla—Death of Ysabel and Juan Maria—Indian Skirmish—Crosses and Piles of Stones.

SOME of the tales which were narrated to me of the bloody deeds of the Comanches were so affecting and tragical, that they would form admirable themes for the composition of a romance. I may mention one, which was of very recent occurrence, and particularly interested me, as I passed the very spot where the tragical catastrophe occurred. I give the outlines of the tale as it was told to me; and any one in want of materials to work up an exciting melodrama may help themselves to it *con mucha franqueza*.

In a rancho situated in the valley of the Rio Florido, and nearly half-way between the cities of Durango and Chihuahua, lived a family of hardy *vaqueros*, or cattle-herders, the head of which was a sturdy old sexagenarian, known as El Coxo (the Game Leg). He rejoiced in a "quiver well filled with arrows," since eight fine strapping sons hailed him padre; than any one of whom not a ranchero in the *tierra afuera* could more dexterously *colear* a bull, or at the game of "gallo" tear from its stake the unhappy fowl, and bear it safe from the pursuit of competitors, but piecemeal, to the feet of his admiring lady-love.

Of these eight mozos, he who bore away the palm of rancheral superiority, but still in a very slight degree, was the third son, and the handsomest (no little praise, where each and all laid claim to the title of "buen mozo y guapo"), by name Escamilla, a proper lad of twenty, five feet ten out of his zapatos, straight as an organo, and lithesome as a reed. He was, moreover, more polished than the others, having been schooled at Queretaro, a city, in the estimation of the people of the tierra afuera, second only to Mejico itself.

With his city breeding, he had of course imbibed a taste for dress, and quite dazzled the eyes of the neighbouring rancheras when, on his return to his paternal home, he made his first appearance at a grand "funcion de toros" in all the elaborate finery of a Queretaro dandy. In this first passage of arms he greatly distinguished himself, having thrown three bulls by the tail with consummate adroitness, and won enthusiastic "vivas" from the muchachas, who graced with their presence the exciting sport.

Close at the heels of Escamilla, and almost rivalling him in good looks and dexterity, came Juan Maria, his next and elder brother, who, indeed, in the eyes of the more practical vaqueros, far surpassed his brother in manliness of appearance, and equalled him in horsemanship, wanting alone that "brilliancy of execution" which the other had acquired in the inner provinces, and in practice against the wilder and more active bulls of the tierra caliente.

Now Juan Maria, hitherto the first at el gallo and bull-tailing, had always laid the trophies of the sport at the feet of one Ysabel Mora, called, from the hacienda where she resided, Ysabel de la Cadena, a pretty black-eyed girl of sixteen, the toast of the valleys of Nazos and Rio Florido, and celebrated even by the cantadores at the last fair of el Valle de San Bartolomo as "la moza mas guapa de la tierra afuera." It so happened that the last year, Ysabel had made her first appearance at a public funcion; and at this "gallo" she was wooed, and in a measure won, by the presentation of the remains of the gallant rooster at the hands of Juan Maria; who, his offering being well received, from that moment looked upon the pretty Ysabel as his corteja, or sweetheart; and she, nothing loth at having the properest lad of the valley at her feet, permitted his attentions, and apparently returned his love.

To make, however, a long story short, the dandy Escamilla, who, too fine to work, had more time on his hands for courting, dishonourably supplanted his brother in the affections of Ysabel; and as Juan Maria, too frank and noble-hearted to force his suit, at once gave way to his more favoured brother, the affair was concluded between the girl and Escamilla, and a day named for the marriage ceremony, which was to take place at the hacienda of the bride, where, in honour of the occasion, a grand funcion de toros was to be held, at which all the neighbours (the nearest of whom was forty miles distant), were to be present, including, of course, the stalwart sons of El Coxo, the brothers of the bridegroom.

Two or three days before the one appointed for the marriage, the father with his eight sons made their appearance, their gallant figures, as mounted on stout Californian horses they entered the hacienda, exacting a buzz of admiration from the collected rancheros.

The next day El Coxo, with all his sons excepting Escamilla, attended the master of the hacienda into the plains, for the purpose of driving in the bulls which were required for the morrow's sport, while the other rancheros remained to complete a large corral which was destined to secure them; El Coxo and his sons being selected for the more arduous work of driving in the bulls, being the most expert and best-mounted horsemen of the whole neighbourhood.

It was towards the close of day, and the sun was fast sinking behind the rugged crest of the "Bolson," tinging the serrated ridge of that isolated mountain-chain with a golden flood of light, while the mezquite-covered plain beneath lay cold and grey under the deep shadow of the sierra. The shrill pipe of the quail was heard, as it called together the bevy for the night; hares limped out of the thick cover and sought their feeding-grounds; overhead the melancholy cry of the gruyas sounded feebly in the aërial distance of their flight; the lowing of cattle resounded from the banks of the arroyo, where the herdsmen were driving them to water; the peones, or labourers of the farm, were quitting the milpas, and already seeking their homes, where, at the doors, the women with naked arms were pounding the tortillas on the stone *metate*, in preparation for the evening meal; and the universal quiet, and the soft and subdued beams of the sinking sun, which shed a chastened light over the whole landscape, proclaimed that the day was drawing to a close, and that man and beast were seeking the well-earned rest after their daily toil.

The two lovers were sauntering along, careless of the beauty of the scene and hour, and conscious of nothing save their own enraptured thoughts, and the aërial castles, which probably both were building, of future happiness and love.

As they strolled onward, a little cloud of dust arose from the chapparal in front of them; and in the distance, but seemingly in another direction, they heard the shouts of the returning cowherds, and the thundering tread of the bulls they were driving to the corral. In advance of these was seen one horseman, trotting quickly on towards the hacienda.

Nevertheless the cloud of dust before them rolled rapidly onwards, and presently several horsemen emerged from it, galloping towards them in the road.

"Here come the bullfighters," exclaimed the girl, withdrawing her waist from the encircling arm of Escamilla; "let us return."

"Perhaps they are my brothers," answered he; and continued, "Yes, they are eight: look."

But what saw the poor girl, as, with eyes almost starting from her head, and motionless with sudden fear, she directs her gaze at the approaching horsemen, who now, turning a bend in the chapparal, are within a few hundred yards of them!

Escamilla follows the direction of the gaze, and one look congeals the trembling coward. A band of Indians are upon them. Naked to the waist, and painted horribly for war, with brandished spears they rush on. Heedless of the helpless maid, and leaving her to her fate, the coward turned and fled, shouting as he ran the dreaded signal of "Los barbaros! los barbaros!"

A horseman met him—it was Juan Maria, who, having lassoed a little antelope on the plains, had ridden in advance of his brothers to present it to the false but unfortunate Ysabel. The exclamations of the frightened Escamilla, and one glance down the road, showed him the peril of the poor girl. Throwing down the animal he was carefully carrying in his arms, he dashed the spurs furiously into the sides of his horse, and rushed like the wind to the rescue. But already the savages were upon her, with a whoop of bloodthirsty joy. She, covering her face with her hands, shrieks to her old lover to save her:—"Salva me, Juan Maria, por Dios, salva me!" At that moment the lance of the foremost Indian pierced her heart, and in another her reeking scalp was brandished exultingly aloft by the murderous savage.

Shortlived, however, was his triumph: the clatter of a galloping horse thunders over the ground, and causes him to turn his head. Almost bounding through the air, and in a cloud of dust, with ready lasso swinging round his head, Juan Maria flies, alas! too late, to the rescue of the unhappy maiden. Straight upon the foremost Indian he charged, regardless of the flight of arrows with which he was received. The savage, terrified at the wild and fierce look of his antagonist, turns to fly; but the open coil of the lasso whirls from the expert hand of the Mexican, and the noose falls over the Indian's head, and, as the thrower passes in his horse's stride, drags him heavily to the ground.

But Juan Maria had fearful odds to contend against, and was unarmed, save by a small *machete*, or rusty sword. But with this he attacks the nearest Indian, and, succeeding in bringing him within reach of his arm, cleaves his head by a sturdy stroke, and the savage dropped dead from his horse. The others, keeping at a distance, assailed him with arrows, and already he was pierced with many bleeding wounds. Still the gallant fellow fights bravely against the odds, and is encouraged by the shouts of his father and brothers, who are galloping, with loud cries, to the rescue. At that moment an arrow, discharged at but a few paces' distance, buried itself to the feathers in his breast, and the brothers reach the spot but in time to see Juan Maria fall from his horse, and his bloody scalp borne away in triumph by a naked savage.

The Indians at that moment were reinforced by a body of some thirty or forty others, and a fierce combat ensued between them and Coxo and his sons, who fought with desperate courage to avenge the murder of Juan Maria and the poor Ysabel. Half a dozen of the Comanches bit the dust, and two of the Mexicans lay bleeding on the ground; but the rancheros, coming up from the hacienda in force, compelled the Indians to retreat, and, as night was coming on, they were not pursued. On the ground lay the still quivering body of the girl, and the two Indians near her who were killed by Juan Maria. One of them had his neck broken and his brains dashed out by being dragged over the sharp stones by the horse of the latter, the lasso being fast to the high pommel of the saddle. This Indian still held the long raven scalp-lock of the girl in his hand. Juan Maria was quite dead, and pierced with upwards of twenty bleeding wounds; two of his brothers were lying dangerously wounded; and six Indians, besides the two killed by Juan Maria, fell by the avenging arms of El Coxo and his sons. The bodies of Ysabel and Juan Maria were borne by the rancheros to the hacienda, and both were buried the next day side by side, at the very hour when the marriage was to have been performed. Escamilla, ashamed of his base cowardice, disappeared, and was not seen for some days, when he returned to his father's rancho, packed up his things, and returned to Queretaro, where he married shortly after.

Just twelve months after the above tragical event occurred, I passed the spot. About three hundred yards from the gate of the hacienda were erected, side by side, two wooden crosses, roughly hewn out of a log of pine. On one, a rudely-cut inscription, in Mexico-Castilian, invites the passer-by to bestow

"Un Ave Maria y un Pater Noster
Por el alma de Ysabel Mora,
Qui à los manos de los barbaros cayo muerta,
El dia 11 de Octubre, el año 1845,
En la flor de su juventud y hermosúra."

"One Ave Maria and a Pater Noster for the repose of the soul of Ysabel Mora, who fell by the hands of the barbarians on the 11th of October of the year 1845, and in the flower of her youth and beauty."

On the other—

"Aqui yace Juan Maria Orteza,
Vecino de ——,
Matado por los barbaros, el dia 11 de Octubre,
del año 1845.
Ora por el, Cristiano, por Dios."

"Here lies Juan Maria Orteza, native of——, killed by the barbarians on the 11th of October, 1845.

"Christian, for the sake of God, pray for his soul."

The goodly piles of stones, to which I added my offering, at the feet of both crosses, testify that the invocation has not been neglected, and that many an Ave Maria and Pater Noster has been breathed, to release from purgatory the souls of Ysabel and Juan Maria.

CHAPTER XIV.

Durango—State of the Province—Its Savage Enemies—The Apaches—Comanches—Their Annual Invasion—Pusillanimity of Mexicans—Ruinous Depredations—Danger of Travelling—A Mozo Volunteer—A Glance at the State of Mexico—Causes of its Miserable Condition—Its Physical Disadvantages—The Character of the People—Unfitness for Republican Form of Government—Causes of Revolutions—Serfdom—Absence of Law and Freedom.

THE city of Durango* may be considered as the Ultima Thule of the civilised portion of Mexico. Beyond it, to the north and north-west, stretch away the vast uncultivated and unpeopled plains of Chihuahua, the Bolson de Mapimi, and the arid deserts of the Gila. In the oases of these, wild and hostile tribes of Indians have their dwelling-places, from which they continually descend upon the border settlements and haciendas, sweeping off the herds of horses and mules, and barbarously killing the unarmed peasantry. This warfare—if warfare it can be called, where the aggression and bloodshed are on one side only, and passive endurance on the other—has existed from immemorial time; and the wonder is that the country has not long since been abandoned by the persecuted inhabitants, who at all seasons are subject to their attacks. The Apaches, whose country borders upon the department of Durango, are untiring and incessant in their hostility against the whites; and, being near neighbours, are enabled to act with great rapidity and unawares against the haciendas and ranchos on the frontier. They are a treacherous and cowardly race of Indians, and seldom attack even the Mexicans save by treachery and ambuscade. When they have carried off a number of horses and mules sufficient for their present wants, they send a deputation to the governors of Durango and Chihuahua to express their anxiety for peace. This is invariably granted them, and when *en paz* they resort to the frontier villages, and even the capital of the department, for the purpose of trade and amusement. The animals they have stolen in Durango and Chihuahua they find a ready market for in New Mexico and Sonora; and this traffic is most unblushingly carried on, and countenanced by the authorities of the respective states.

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* The city was founded in 1559, by Velasco el Primero, Viceroy of New Spain, previous to which it was a presidio, or fortified post, to protect the frontier from the incursions of the Indians (Chichimecs).

But the most formidable enemy, and most feared and dreaded by the inhabitants of Durango and Chihuahua, are the warlike Comanches, who, from their distant prairie country beyond the Del Norte and Rio Pecos, at certain seasons of the year, and annually, undertake regularly organised expeditions into these states, and frequently far into the interior (as last year to the vicinity of Sombrerete), for the purpose of procuring animals and SLAVES, carrying off the young boys and girls, and massacring the adults in the most wholesale and barbarous manner.

So regular are these expeditions, that in the Comanche calendar the month of September is known as the *Mexico moon*, as the other months are designated the buffalo moon, the young bear moon, the corn moon, &c. They generally invade the country in three different divisions, of from two to five hundred warriors in each. One, the most southern, passes the Rio Grande between the old presidios of San Juan and the mouth of the Pecos, and harries the fertile plains and wealthy haciendas of el Valle de San Bartolomo, the Rio Florido, San José del Parral, and the Rio Nasas. Every year their incursions extend farther into the interior, as the frontier haciendas become depopulated by their ravages, and the villages deserted and laid waste. For days together, in the Bolson de Mapimi, I traversed a country completely deserted on this account, passing through ruined villages untrodden for years by the foot of man.

The central division enters between the Presidio del Norte and Monclova, where they join the party coming in from the north, and, passing the mountains of Mapimi and traversing a desert country destitute of water, where they suffer the greatest privations, ravage the valleys of Mapimi, Guajoquilla, and Chihuahua, and even the haciendas at the foot of the Sierra Madre. It appears incredible that no steps are taken to protect the country from this invasion, which does not take the inhabitants on a sudden or unawares, but at certain and regular seasons and from known points. Troops are certainly employed *nominally* to check the Indians, but very rarely attack them, although the Comanches give every opportunity; and, thoroughly despising them, meet them on the open field, and with equal numbers almost invariably defeat the regular troops. The people themselves are unable to offer any resistance, however well inclined they may be to do so, as it has always been the policy of the government to keep them unarmed; and, being unacquainted with the use of weapons, when placed in their hands they have no confidence, and offer but a feeble resistance. So perfectly aware of this fact are the Comanches, that they never hesitate to attack superior numbers. When in small parties the Mexicans never resist, even if armed, but fall upon their knees and cry for mercy. Sometimes, however, goaded by the murder of their families and friends, the rancheros collect together, and, armed with bows and arrows and slings and stones, go out to meet the Indians (as occurred when I was passing), and are slaughtered like sheep.

In the fall of last year, 1845, and at the present moment, 1846, the Indians have been more audacious than ever was known in previous years. It may be, that in the present instance they are rendered more daring by the knowledge of the war between the United States and Mexico, and the supposition that the troops would consequently be withdrawn from the scene of their operations. They are now (September) overrunning the whole department of Durango and Chihuahua, have cut off all communication, and defeated in two pitched battles the regular troops sent against them. Upwards of ten thousand head of horses and mules have already been carried off, and scarcely has a hacienda or rancho on the frontier been unvisited, and everywhere the people have been killed or captured. The roads are impassable, all traffic is stopped, the ranchos barricaded, and the inhabitants afraid to venture out of their doors. The posts and expresses travel at night, avoiding the roads, and intelligence is brought in daily of massacres and harryings.

My servants refused to proceed farther; nor will money induce a Durangueño to risk his scalp. Every one predicts certain destruction if I venture to cross the plains to Chihuahua, as the road lies in the very midst of the scenes of the Indian ravages. My hostess, with tears in her eyes, implored me not to attempt the journey; but my mind was made up to proceed, and alone, if I could not induce a mozo to accompany me. I had resolved to reach New Mexico by a certain time, and in travelling through a dangerous country lay it down as a principle not to be deterred by risks, but to "go ahead," and trust to fortune and a sharp look-out.

I had made preparations for my departure, and had given up any hope of procuring a mozo, when, at the eleventh hour, one presented himself, in the person of one of the most rascally-looking natives that ever stuck knife into his master. Asking him what induced him to run the risk of accompanying me, he answered that, being "muy pobre" and unable to procure a living (the road was shut to him), and hearing that "su merced"—my worship—had offered high wages, he had determined to volunteer; being, moreover, as he assured me, "muy valiente y aficionado a manejar las armas"—very valiant and accustomed to the use of arms. The end of it was that I engaged him, although the man bore a notoriously bad character, and was more than suspected of being a ladron of the worst description. But it was Hobson's choice at the time, and I did not hesitate to take him, trusting to myself to take care that he did not play me false. I was, however, a little shaken when the same evening a man accosted me as I was walking in the streets with an English gentleman, a resident in Durango, and informed me that my new mozo was at that moment in a pulque-shop, where, after imbibing more than was good for him, he had confided to a friend, and in the hearing of the man who now gave the information, his intention to ease me of my goods and chattels and animals, premising that, as he had heard from my late servants that I intrusted my mozo with arms and generally rode in advance, it would be an easy matter some fine morning to administer *un pistoletazo en la espalda*—a pistol-ball in my back—and make off with the property to Chihuahua or Sonora, where he would have no difficulty in disposing of the plunder. However, I paid no attention to this story, thinking that, if true, it was merely a drunken boast.

As Durango may be called the limit of Mexico proper and its soi-disant civilization, it may not be out of place to take a hasty glance at the general features of the country, the social and moral condition of the people, and the impressions conveyed to my mind in my journey through it.

There are many causes, physical and moral, which prevent Mexico from progressing in prosperity and civilization. Although possessing a vast territory, which embraces all the varieties of climate of the temperate and torrid zones, with a rich and prolific soil capable of yielding every natural production of the known world, yet these natural advantages are counterbalanced by obstacles, which prevent their being as profitable to the inhabitants as might naturally be expected, and in a great measure render them negative and of no avail.

A glance at the physical geography of Mexico will show that the extensive and fertile table-lands of the central region are isolated, and, as it were, cut off from communication with the coast, by their position on the ridge of the Cordilleras, and the insurmountable obstacles to a practicable traffic presented by the escarpments of the *terraces*, the steps, as it were, from the elevated table-lands to the maritime districts, and the tropical regions of the interior. The country is also destitute of navigable rivers, and possesses but two of even moderate size—the Rio Grande del Norte, which runs into the Gulf of Mexico, and the Rio Grande, or Colorado of the west, which falls into the Pacific Ocean. Its eastern coast is swept at certain seasons by fearful tempests, and presents not one sheltering harbour or secure roadstead. The tropical region, subject to fatal malaria, is almost excluded to the settlement of the white population, and consequently its natural riches are almost entirely neglected and unappropriated. Moreover, when we look at the component parts of the population of this vast country, we are at no loss to account for the existing evils—the total absence of government, and the universal demoralization and want of energy, moral and physical, which is everywhere apparent.

The entire population is about eight millions, of which three-fifths are Indians, or of Indian origin, and Indios Bravos, or barbarous tribes; the remainder of Spanish descent. This population is scattered over an area of 1,312,850 square miles, in departments widely separated, and having various and distinct interests, the intercommunication insecure, and a large proportion in remote regions, beyond the care or thought of an impotent government.

The vast table-land which stretches along the ridge of the Cordillera of Anahuac, although possessing tracts of great fertility, is not, in itself, the rich and productive region it is generally represented to be. The want of fuel and water must always prevent its being otherwise than thinly inhabited, and these great drawbacks to the population and cultivation of these districts would appear to be insurmountable. I believe the capabilities of the whole country to be much overrated, although its mineral wealth alone must always render it of great importance; but it is a question whether the possession of mineral wealth conduces to the wellbeing of a country. The working of mines of the precious metal in Mexico, however, has certainly caused many spots to be cultivated and inhabited, which would otherwise have been left sterile and unproductive, and has been the means of giving employment to the Indians, and in some degree has partially civilized them, where otherwise they would have remained in their original state of barbarism and ignorance.

The Mexicans, as a people, rank decidedly low in the scale of humanity. They are deficient in moral as well as physical organization: by the latter I do not mean to assert that they are wanting in corporeal qualities, although certainly inferior to most races in bodily strength; but there is a deficiency in that respect which is invariably found attendant upon a low state of moral or intellectual organization. They are treacherous, cunning, indolent, and without energy, and cowardly by nature. Inherent, instinctive cowardice is rarely met with in any race of men, yet I affirm that in this instance it certainly exists, and is most conspicuous; they possess at the same time that amount of brutish indifference to death which can be turned to good account in soldiers, and I believe, if properly led, that the Mexicans would on this account behave tolerably well in the field, but no more than tolerably.

It is a matter of little astonishment to me that the country is in the state it is. It can never progress or become civilized until its present population is supplanted by a more energetic one. The present would-be republican form of government is not adapted to such a population as exists in Mexico, as is plainly evident in the effects of the constantly recurring revolutions. Until a people can appreciate the great principles of civil and religious liberty, the advantages of free institutions are thrown away upon them. A long minority has to be passed through before this can be effected; and in this instance, before the requisite fitness can be attained, the country will probably have passed from the hands of its present owners to a more able and energetic race. On the subject of government I will not touch: I maintain that the Mexicans are incapable of *self*-government, and will always be so until regenerated. The separation from Spain has been the ruin of the country, which, by the by, is quite ready to revert to its former owners; and the prevailing feeling over the whole country inclines to the re-establishment of a monarchical system. The miserable anarchy which has existed since its separation, has sufficiently and bitterly proved to the people the inadequacy of the present one; and the wonder is, that, with the large aristocratic party which so greatly preponderates in Mexico (the army and the church), this much-to-be-desired event has not been brought about.

The cause of the *two hundred and thirty-seven* revolutions which, since the declaration of its independence, have that number of times turned the country upside down, has been individual ambition and lust of power. The intellectual power is in the hands of a few, and by this minority all the revolutions are effected. The army once gained over (which, by the aid of bribes and the priesthood, is an easy matter), the wished-for consummation is at once brought about. It thus happens that, instead of a free republican form of government, the country is ruled by a most perfect military despotism.

The population is divided into but two classes—the high and the low: there is no intermediate rank to connect the two extremes, and consequently the hiatus between them is deep and strongly marked. The relation subsisting between the peasantry and the wealthy haciendados, or landowners, is a species of serfdom, little better than slavery itself. Money, in advance of wages, is generally lent to the peon or labourer, who is by law bound to serve the lender, if required, until such time as the debt is repaid; and as care is taken that this shall never happen, the debtor remains a bondsman to the day of his death.

Law or justice hardly exists in name even, and the ignorant peasantry, under the priestly thraldom which holds them in physical as well as moral bondage, have neither the energy nor courage to stand up for the amelioration of their condition, or the enjoyment of that liberty, which it is the theoretical boast of republican governments their system so largely deals in, but which, in reality, is a practical falsehood and delusion.

CHAPTER XV.

Leave Durango—Salitrose Springs—Rancho of Los Sauces—A Pleasant Companion—Punishment for a Bad Shot—Sail ahead—Meet a Caravan—General Armijo — Antelope — A Law Case — Farmhouses—Encamp outside—Indian Alarm—Another Caravan—El Gallo—Indian "Sign"—A Scalp lost—Life in a Rancho—Traders.

On the 10th I left Durango for Chihuahua and New Mexico, taking with me the mozo I have before mentioned as bearing anything but a good character. The first day's march led through a wild uncultivated country, with large plains of excellent pasture, but not a symptom of cultivation. We stopped at night at the hacienda of El Chorro, a little hamlet of adobe huts surrounding the *casa grande* of the plantation. As we arrived, the rancheros were driving in an immense cavalcade or herd of horses from the pastures, to be secured during the night in the corrals and near the hacienda, *por las novedades que hay*—on account of the novelties (*i. e.* Indians) which are abroad—as the proprietor informed me. The vicinity of the hacienda abounds in salitrose springs and deposits of muriate of soda, to which the horses and mules were constantly breaking away, and drinking the water, and licking the earth with the greatest avidity. Distance from Durango twenty-eight miles.

11*th.*—To the rancho of Los Sauces—the willows. The plains to-day were covered with cattle, and horses and mules. In the morning I was riding slowly ahead of my cavallada, passing at the time through a lonely mesquite-grove, when the sudden report of fire-arms, and the whistling of a bullet past my head at rather unpleasantly close quarters, caused me to turn sharply round, when I saw my amiable mozo with a pistol in his hand, some fifteen yards behind me, looking very guilty and foolish. To whip a pistol out of my holsters and ride up to him was the work of an instant; and I was on the point of blowing out his brains, when his terrified and absurdly guilty-looking face turned my ire into an immoderate fit of laughter.

"Amigo," I said to him, "do you call this being skilled in the use of arms, to miss my head at fifteen yards?"

"*Ah, caballero!* in the name of all the saints I did not fire at you, but at a duck which was flying over the road. *No lo cree su merced*—your worship cannot believe I would do such a thing." Now it so happened, that the pistols, which I had given him to carry, were secured in a pair of holsters tightly buckled and strapped round his waist. It was a difficult matter to unbuckle them at any time; and as to his having had time to get one out to fire at a duck flying over the road, it was impossible, even if such an idea had occurred to him. I was certain that the duck was a fable, invented when he had missed me, and, in order to save my ammunition, and my head from another sportsmanlike display, I halted and took from him everything in the shape of offensive weapon, not excepting his knife; and wound up a sermon, which I deemed it necessary to give him, by administering a couple of dozen, well laid on with the buckle-end of my surcingle, at the same time giving him to understand, that if, hereafter, I had reason to suspect that he had even dreamed of another attempt upon my life, I would pistol him without a moment's hesitation.—Distance from El Chorro thirty-six miles.

12*th*.—To the rancho of Yerbaniz, through the same uncultivated plains, surrounded by sierras, and passing by a ridge from one into another, each being as like the other as twins. For a thousand miles the aspect of these plains never varied, and the sketch of the plain of Los Sauces would answer for the plain of El Paso, and every intermediate one between Durango and New Mexico. At daybreak this morning I descried three figures, evidently armed and mounted men, descending a ridge and advancing towards me. As in this country to meet a living soul on the road is perhaps to meet an enemy thirsting for your property or your life, I stopped my animals, and, uncovering my rifle, rode on to reconnoitre. The strangers also halted on seeing me, and, again moving on when they saw me alone, we advanced, cautiously and prepared, towards each other. As they drew near I at once saw by the heavy rifle which each carried across his saddle-bow that they were from New Mexico, and that one was a white man. He proved to be a German named Spiers, who was on his way to the fair of San Juan with a caravan of nearly forty waggons loaded with merchandise from the United States. He had left the frontier of Missouri in May, crossing the grand prairies to Santa Fé, and, learning that his American teamsters would not be permitted to enter Durango, he had ridden on in advance to obtain permission for their admittance. His waggons had been nearly six months on the road, travelling the whole time, and were now a few miles behind them. He gave a dismal account of the state of the country through which I was about to pass. The Comanches were everywhere, and two days before had killed two of his men; and not a soul ventured out of his house in that part of the country. He likewise said it was impossible that I could reach Chihuahua alone, and urged me strongly to return. The runaway Governor of New Mexico, General Armijo, was travelling in company with his caravan, on his way to Mexico, to give an account of his shameful cowardice in surrendering Santa Fé to the Americans without a show of resistance.

A little farther on I saw the long line of waggons, like ships at sea, crossing a plain before me. They were all drawn by teams of eight fine mules, and under the charge and escort of some thirty strapping young Missourians, each with a long heavy rifle across his saddle. I stopped and had a long chat with Armijo, who, a mountain of fat, rolled out of his American dearborn, and inquired the price of cotton goods in Durango, he having some seven waggon-loads with him, and also what they said, in Mexico, of the doings in Santa Fé, alluding to its capture by the Americans without any resistance. I told him that there was but one opinion respecting it expressed all over the country—that General Armijo and the New Mexicans were a pack of arrant cowards; to which he answered, "Adios! They don't know that I had but 75 men to fight 3000. What could I do?" Twenty-one of the teamsters belonging to this caravan had left it a few days previously, with the intention of returning to the United States by the way of Texas. What became of them will be presently narrated.

After leaving the caravan I saw a herd of *berendos* (antelope) in the plain, but was unable to get within shot, the ground being destitute of cover, and the animals very wild. We were now in the country of large game, deer and antelope being abundant in the plains, and bears occasionally met with in the sierras.

This night I encamped near a rancho, being refused admittance into the building, and picqueted my animals around the camp. I had also a disagreement with an arriero, whom I had hired at Los Sauces, with his mule, to carry one of my packs, one of the mules being lame. He had agreed, for a certain sum, to travel with me two *jornadas* or days' journeys. In Mexican travelling there are two distinct jornadas—one of *atajo*, or the usual distance performed by *arrieros;* the other *de caballo*, or journey performed on horseback, or with light packs. To prevent all misunderstanding, I had explicitly agreed with him for two of my own jornadas, or days' travel, of twelve leagues, or thirty-five miles, each day; but when he heard that the Indians were so near at hand, he wanted to give up his contract, and claimed the full pay of two jornadas for the distance he had already come, which was thirty-six miles, affirming that it was two regular days' journeys of atajo. This I refused to pay him, offering the half of the stipulated sum, as he had performed but one day's journey. Blustering and threatening, off he went to the alcalde, for in all ranchos the head man is chief magistrate, who sent me a peremptory order to pay the demand in full; to which I sent back an answer more energetic than polite, together with the sum I had originally offered, saying at the same time that if it was not accepted I would not pay a farthing. Presently I saw the alcalde, attended by a posse, sally from the gate of the rancho and approach my camp, where I was very busily engaged in cleaning my arms. No sooner was the worthy near enough to observe my employment, than he wheeled off suddenly and returned to the rancho, and I saw no more of him or the arriero.

The ranchos and haciendas in Durango and Chihuahua are all enclosed by a high wall, flanked at the corners by circular bastions loopholed for musketry. The entrance is by a large gate, which is closed at night; and on the azotea, or flat roof of the building, a sentry is constantly posted day and night. Round the corral are the dwellings of the peones; the casa grande, or proprietor's house, being generally at one end, and occupying one or more sides of the square. In this instance I was refused admittance into the enclosure—for what reason I do not know—and obliged to encamp about two hundred yards from it, having to pay for two or three logs of wood, with which I made a fire. The rancheria, however, bears a very bad character, as I afterwards learned; and this night I had as much to dread from them and my rascally mozo as from the sudden attack of the Indians. My blanket was a little arsenal, as I had not only my own, but my servant's arms, to take care of. That worthy begged hard for a pistol or gun, saying that, if the Indians came, he would be killed like a dog. I told him to go into the rancho amongst his countrymen, which I believe he did, for I saw or heard nothing more of him during the night.

13*th.*—To La Noria Perdizenia, forty miles; the country getting more wild and desolate, and entirely destitute of water. Not a sign of habitation, or a human being on the road. We passed a gap between two sierras, called El Passage—the passage—which is wild and picturesque, the plains covered with mezquit, and a species of palm, called *palma.* We were approaching the village of La Perdizenia a little before sunset, through a broken country, with hills and bluffs rising on each side of the road, when suddenly, as I was riding in advance, I saw on one of these, which was some 500 or 600 yards from the road, a party of Indians, on horseback and on foot. I instantly stopped, and without saying a word, or pointing out the cause to the mozo, dismounted, and, catching the wildest mule, immediately tied her legs together with a riata, and covered the eyes of all with their tapojos or blinders. I then pointed with my finger to the hill, saying, "Mire, los Indios."

"Ave Maria Purissima! estamos perdidos"—we are lost!—exclaimed the Mexican, and made towards his horse, from which he had also dismounted; but this I prevented, telling him that he had to fight, and not run. Half dead with fright, he threw himself on his knees, beseeching all the saints in the calendar to save him, and vowing offerings of all kinds if his life were spared. By this time the Indians, perceiving that there were but two of us, commenced descending the hill, leaving one or two of the party on the top as videttes. Seeing a fight was inevitable, I stuck my cleaning-rod into the ground as a rest for my rifle; and, placing my carbine and pistols at my side, sat down to my work, intending to open upon them with my rifle as soon as they came within reach. However, this they did not seem inclined to do, but, striking their shields, and brandishing their bows, shouted to me to give up my animals and pass on. I kept my position for some time, but, finding they were not inclined to attack me, and not wishing to remain there when night was coming on, I unloosed the mules, and sent them forward with the mozo, remaining in rear myself to cover their retreat. Once in his saddle, invoking "todos los santos," off he galloped toward the village, driving the mules pell-mell before him; nor did he stop until he was in the midst of the plaza, narrating to shrieking women, and all the population of the village, his miraculous escape.

The reason of the Indians not charging upon us was, that they saw a party of Mexicans on their way to the village, from a mine in the sierra, who were concealed from our view, and thought, no doubt, that we might be able to defend ourselves until the noise of the firing would bring them to our assistance.

When I arrived at La Noria I rode into the square, and found the inhabitants in the greatest alarm and dismay. They had been expecting the Indians for some days, as they had already committed several atrocities in the neighbouring ranchos. The women were weeping and flying about in every direction, hiding their children and valuables, barricading the houses, and putting what few arms they could collect in the hands of the reluctant men. As I rode through the village seeking a corral for my animals, a woman ran out of a house and begged me to enter, offering her stable, and corn, and straw for the beasts, and the best her house afforded for myself. I gladly accepted her hospitality, and followed her into a neat clean little house, with a corral full of fig-trees and grape-vines, and a large yard with a pond of water in the centre, and a stack of hoja at one end, promising well for the comfort of the tired animals.

"Ah!" she exclaimed on my entering; "gracios à Dios, I have some one to protect the lone widow and her fatherless children. If the savages come now, I don't care, since we have good arms in the house, and those 'qui saben manejarlos'—who know how to use them."

After supper I visited the alcalde, and advised him to take some measures to oppose the Indians in case they attacked the place, as I had no doubt that the party which I had seen was but the advanced guard of a large body.

"Ah, caballero," he answered, "que podemos hacer?—what can we do? We have no arms, and our people have no courage to use them if we had; but, thank God! the barbaros are ignorant of this, and will not attack the town; for how do they know but what we have escopetas in every window? These savages are very ignorant."

The next morning I resumed my journey, much to the surprise of the people of La Noria, who looked upon us as lost; and, crossing the Nasas beyond the hacienda of El Conejo (the rabbit), intended to go on some leagues farther, when I met some waggons belonging to a Frenchman of Chihuahua, and, as he was brimful of novedades, I returned and camped with them near the hacienda, to hear the news. The Comanches, he said, were in great force beyond the village of El Gallo, and were killing and slaying in every direction. They had, a few days before, attacked a company of bullfighters under a Gachupin named Bernardo, on their way to the fair of El Valle de San Bartolomo, killing seven of them and wounding all the others. They had also had a fight with the troops at the Rio Florido, killing seventeen and wounding many more.

On the 16th I reached El Gallo (the cock), where the Indians three days before had killed two men belonging to Spiers' caravan, within a hundred yards of the village. The road from El Conejo for forty miles passes through a most dismal country, and was crossed several times by the Indian trail. I had now to keep a sharp look-out, as there was no doubt that they were in the neighbourhood, and presently I had ocular proof of their recent presence. We were passing through a chaparral of mezquit, where the road passes near a point of rocks, on which were seated hundreds of sopilotes. About a dozen of these birds flew up from the side of the road, and, turning my horse to the spot, I found they had been collected on the dead body of a Mexican, partly stripped, and the breast displaying several ghastly wounds. The head had been scalped, and a broken arrow still remained buried in the face, or rather what remained of it, for the eyes and part of the brain had been already picked out by the sopilotes, and a great part of the body devoured. Life did not appear to have been extinct many hours; probably he had been killed the night before, as the birds had but that morning discovered the body. We had no means of digging a grave, and therefore were obliged to leave it as we found it; and as soon as I had left the spot the sopilotes recommenced their revolting feast.

I stayed at El Gallo in the house of a farmer who had lost three sons by the Indians within a few years. Two of their widows, young and handsome, were in the house, and he himself had been severely wounded by them on several occasions. Their corn was now ready for cutting, but they were afraid to venture outside the village, and procured enough for their daily consumption by collecting together all the villagers and proceeding to the fields in a body to bring in a supply. I remained here for two days, as one of my mules was seriously lame, during which time my chief occupation was sitting with the family, shelling corn, and *platicando* (chatting). In the evening a guitar was brought, and a fandango got up for my especial amusement. Some of the dances of the country people are not without grace, and with tolerable pantomimic action; but the greatest charms are the extempore songs which accompany the music, and, being chanted to a low broken measure, are at the same time novel and pleasing to the ear. In a rancho the time is occupied in the following way. At daybreak the females of the family rise and prepare the chocolate or atole, which is eaten the first thing in the morning. Breakfast is usually taken about nine o'clock, consisting of meat prepared with chile colorado, frijoles, and tortillas: dinner and supper, at midday and sunset, are likewise substantial meals. The gourd or pumpkin (calabaza) is much used in this part of Mexico, and is an excellent and wholesome vegetable. Between the meals the men employ themselves in the milpas, or attending to the animals; the women busy themselves about the house, making clothes, &c. &c., as with us; but severe labour is unknown to either men or women. While here I assisted in the erection of two wooden crosses on the spot where Spiers' men were killed by the Comanches three days before. They had remained behind the caravan to bring some bread that was baking for the party, when just outside the town they were set upon by the Indians and killed.

In Durango and the neighbouring state of Chihuahua, the rancherias are supplied with such simple goods as they require by small traders, resident in the capitals of these states, who trade from one village to another with two or three waggons, which, when their goods are sold, they freight with supplies for the cities or the mines. These traders are all foreigners—French, Germans, English, and Americans; and their adventures and hairbreadth escapes, while passing through the country overrun by Indians, are often most singular and exciting. Their arrivals in the villages are always welcome, as then the muchachas make their purchases of rebosos and gay enaguas, and the "majos" their sarapes and sashes.

The night before my departure from El Gallo, I was sitting in the corral "platicando," while all the family were busy as usual corn-shelling, when a loud voice was heard, a cracking of whips, and cries of wo-ha wo-ha-a wo-o-h-ha!

"Estrangeros!" exclaimed one of the girls.

"Los Tejanos!" exclaimed another.

"Los carros" (the waggons), said Don José, and I threw my sarape over my shoulder, and, proceeding to the open space in the centre of the village, dignified by the name of plaza, found four waggons just arrived, and the teamsters unhitching the mules. They proved to be the caravan of one Davy Workman, an Englishman by birth, but long resident in, and a citizen of, the United States; a tall, hard-featured man, and most determined in look, as he was known to be in character—*un hombre muy bien conocido*, as my *patron* informed me. By this arrival more *novedades* were brought, and los Indios! los Indios! were on everybody's tongue.

Señor Angel, my mozo, here openly rebelled, and refused to proceed farther; but a promise of a few extra dollars at length induced him to agree to accompany me as far as Mapimi, sixty-five miles from El Gallo, and situated on what is called the frontier.

CHAPTER XVI.

To Mapimi—Palmas—Desert Country—A Rattlesnake—Camp on Plain—Without Water—Lose Animals—Hunt—Disagreeable Surprise—Indians—Narrow Escape—Night March to El Gallo—Excessive Thirst—Profound Darkness—Reach Cattle Wells—Animals Safe—La Cadena—Angel becomes valiant—Long Ride—Reach Mapimi—Bolson de Mapimi—Hire a Servant—Advised not to proceed—Street Camp—Levee of Leperos—Pelados—Panchito's Tail eaten.

From El Gallo to Mapimi a mule-track leads the traveller through a most wild and broken country, perfectly deserted; rugged sierras rising from the mezquit-covered plains, which are sterile and entirely destitute of water. A little out of the direct route is the hacienda de la Cadena, a solitary plantation standing in a dismal plain, the scene of constantly recurring Indian attacks; for an arroyo or water-course which runs through it, and in which that necessary element is found at intervals in deep holes, is resorted to by the Indians, when on their way to the haciendas of the interior.

I had resolved to pass through this part of the country, although far out of the beaten track, in order to visit El Real de Mapimi, a little town, near a sierra which is said to be very rich in ore; and also for the purpose of travelling through a tract of country laid waste by the Comanches, and but little known, and which is designated, par excellence, "los desiertos de la frontera"—the deserts of the frontier; not so much from its sterility, as on account of its having been abandoned by its inhabitants, from the fear of the perpetual Indian attacks, as it lay in their direct route to the interior.

As sixty-five miles was rather a long journey for one day, I resolved to start late, and proceed some twenty or thirty miles and then encamp, although it would be necessary to remain that night without water. Leaving El Gallo about midday, I stopped at some cattle-wells a short distance from the village to water the animals the last thing, and fill my own "huages" (a canteen made out of a gourd). The mules and horses, however, which unfortunately did not anticipate a scarcity at the end of their day's journey, refused to drink, and we continued our journey under a hot and burning sun.

The ranchero's family here took leave of me with tears, and prayers to all the saints for my safe journey. The old grandmother, after blessing me, told me that she had, by dint of I don't know how many Ave Marias, interested the patron saint of the family in my behalf, one San Ysidro of Guadalaxara, who, she was assured, would take me under his especial keeping. She likewise hung round my neck a copper coin with a miraculous hole in it, which would preserve me from the arrows of the Comanches, and the still more dangerous weapons of "el enimigo del mundo," who, she said, was ever "cazando" (hunting) after the souls of heretics.

The plains were still covered with mezquit, and a species of palm which grows to the height of five or six feet, a bunch of long narrow leaves issuing from the top of the stem, which is frequently as thick as a man's body. From a distance it is exactly like an Indian with a head-dress of feathers, and Angel was continually calling my attention to these vegetable savages. Between the plains an elevated ridge presents itself, generally a spur from the sierras which run parallel to them on the eastern and western flanks, and this formation is everywhere the same. Where the ground is covered with mezquit-thickets or chapparales, a high but coarse grass is found; but on the bluffs is an excellent species, known in Mexico as gramma, and on the prairies as a variety of the buffalo-grass, on which cattle and horses thrive and fatten equally as well as on grain.

As I was riding close to a bunch of mezquit the whiz of a rattlesnake's tail caused my horse to spring on one side and tremble with affright. I dismounted, and, drawing the wiping-stick from my rifle, approached the reptile to kill it. The snake, as thick as my wrist, and about three feet long, was curled up, with its flat vicious-looking head and neck erected, and its tail rattling violently. A blow on the head soon destroyed it, but, as I was remounting, my rifle slipped out of my hand, and crack went the stock. A thong of buckskin however soon made it as secure as ever.

After travelling about twenty-five miles I selected a camping-ground, and, unloading the mules, made a kind of breastwork of the packs and saddles, behind which to retreat in case of an Indian attack, which was more than probable, as we had discovered plenty of recent signs in the plains. It was about sunset when we had completed our little fort, and, spreading a *petate*, or mat, the animals were soon at their suppers of corn, which I had brought for the purpose. They had all their cabrestas or ropes round their necks, and trailing on the ground, in order that they might be easily caught and tied when they had finished their corn; and, giving the mozo strict orders to this effect, I rolled myself in my blanket and was soon asleep, as I intended to be on the watch myself from midnight, to prevent surprise. In about two or three hours I awoke, and, jumping up, found Angel asleep, and that all the animals had disappeared. It was pitchy dark, and not a trace of them could be distinguished, After an hour's ineffectual search I returned to camp, and waited until daybreak, when it would be light enough to track the animals. This there was no difficulty in doing, and I at once found that, after hunting for some time for water, they had taken the track back to El Gallo, whither I had no doubt they had returned for water. It was certainly a great relief to me to find that they had not been taken by the Indians, which at first I thought was the case; but their course was perfectly plain where they had trodden down the high grass, wet with dew, in their search for water. Not finding it, they had returned at once, and in a direct course, to our yesterday's trail, and made off towards El Gallo, without stopping to eat, or even pick the tempting gramma on their way. The only fear now was, that a wandering party of Indians should fall in with them on the road, when they would not only seize the animals, but discover our present retreat by following their trail.

When I returned to camp I immediately despatched Angel to El Gallo, ordering him to come back instantly, and without delaying a moment, when he had found the beasts, remaining myself to take charge of the camp and baggage. On examining a pair of saddle-bags which my kind hostess at El Gallo had filled with tortillas, quesos, &c., I found that Mr. Angel had, either during the night, or when I was hunting for the missing animals, discussed all its contents, not leaving as much as a crumb; and as the fresh morning air had given me a sharp appetite, I took my rifle and slung a double-barrel carbine on my back, placed a pair of pistols in my belt, and, thus armed, started off to the sierra to kill an antelope and broil a collop for breakfast. Whilst hunting I crossed the sierra, which was rocky and very precipitous, and from the top looked down into a neighbouring plain, where I fancied I could discern an arroyo with running water. Half suffocated at the time with thirst, I immediately descended, although the place was six or seven miles out in the plain, and thought of nothing but assuaging my thirst. I had nearly completed the descent when a band of antelope passed me, and stopped to feed in a little plateau near which ran a cañon or hollow, which would enable me to approach them within shot. Down the cañon I accordingly crept, carefully concealing myself in the long grass and bushes, and occasionally raising my head to judge the distance. In this manner I had approached, as I thought, to within rifle-shot, and, creeping between two rocks at the edge of the hollow, I raised my head to reconnoitre, and met a sight which caused me to drop it again behind the cover, like a turtle drawing into its shell. About two hundred yards from the cañon, and hardly twice that distance from the spot where I lay concealed, were riding quietly along, in Indian file, eleven Comanches, painted and armed for war. Each had a lance and bow and arrows, and the chief, who was in advance, had a rifle, in a gaily ornamented case of buckskin, hanging at his side. They were naked to the waist, their buffalo robes being thrown off their shoulders and lying on their hips, and across the saddle, which was a mere pad of buffalo-skin. They were making towards the cañon, which I imagined they would cross by a deer-path near where I stood. I certainly thought my time was come, but was undecided whether to fire upon them as soon as they were near enough, or trust to the chance of their passing me undiscovered. Although the odds were great, I certainly had the advantage, being in an excellent position, and having six shots in readiness, even if they charged, when they could only attack me one at a time. I took in at once the advantages of my position, and determined, if they showed an intention of crossing the cañon by the deer-path, to attack them, but not otherwise. As they approached, laughing and talking, I raised my rifle, and, resting it in the fork of a bush which completely hid me, I covered the chief, his brawny breast actually shining (oily as it was) at the end of my sight. His life, and probably mine, hung on a thread. Once he turned his horse, when he arrived at the deer-track which crossed the cañon, and, thinking that they were about to approach by that path, my finger even pressed the trigger; but an Indian behind him said a few words, and pointed along the plain, when he resumed his former course and passed on. I certainly breathed more freely, although (such is human nature) no sooner had they turned off than I regretted not having fired. If an unnecessary, it would not have been a rash act, for in my position, and armed as I was, I was more than a match for the whole party. However, antelope and water went unscathed, and as soon as the Indians were out of sight I again crossed the sierra, and reached the camp about two hours before sunset, where, to my disappointment, the animals had not yet arrived, and no signs of their approach were visible on the plain. I determined, if they did not make their appearance by sundown, to return at once to El Gallo, as I suspected my mozo might commit some foul play, and perhaps abscond with the horses and mules. Sun went down, but no Angel; and darkness set in and found me, almost dead with thirst, on my way to El Gallo. It was with no little difficulty I could make my way, now stumbling over rocks, and now impaling myself on the sharp prickles of the palma or nopalo. Several times I was in the act of attacking one of the former, so ridiculously like feathered Indians did they appear in the dim starlight. However, all was hushed and dark—not even a skulking Comanche would risk his neck on such a night: now and then an owl would hoot over head, and the mournful and long-continued howl of the coyote swept across the plain, or a snake rattled as it heard my approaching footstep. When the clouds swept away, and allowed the stars to emit their feeble light, the palms waved in the night air, and raised their nodding heads against the sky, the cry of the coyote became louder, as it was now enabled to pursue its prey, cocuyos flitted amongst the grass like winged sparks of fire, and deer or antelope bounded across my path. The trail indeed was in many parts invisible, and I had to trust to points of rocks and ridges, and trees which I remembered to have passed the day before, to point out my course. Once, choked with thirst, and utterly exhausted—for I had been travelling since sunrise without food or water—I sank down on the damp ground and slept for a couple of hours, and when I awoke the stars were obscured by heavy clouds, and the darkness prevented me distinguishing an object even a few feet distant. I had lost my bearings, and was completely confused, not knowing which course to follow. Trusting to instinct, I took what I considered the proper direction, and shortly after, when it again became light enough to see, I regained the path and pushed rapidly on; and at length the welcome lowing of cattle satisfied me that I was near the wells where I had stopped the previous day. I soon arrived at the spot, and, lowering the goatskin bucket, buried my head in the cold water, and drank a delicious draught.

At about three in the morning, just as the first dawn was appearing, I knocked at the door of the rancho, and the first voice I heard was that of my mozo, asking lazily, "Quien llama?"—who calls?

Every one was soon up, and congratulating me upon being still alive; for when Angel had told them of the loss of the animals, and that I was remaining alone, they gave me up for lost, as the spot where we had encamped was a notorious stopping-place of the Indians when en route for the haciendas. I was so fortunate as to find all the animals safe; they were quietly feeding near the cattle-wells when the mozo arrived there. He made some lame excuse for not returning, but I have no doubt his intention had been to make off with them, which, if I had not suspected something of the sort, and followed him, he would probably have effected.

At daylight I mounted a mule bare-backed, and Angel another; and, leading the remainder, we rode back to the camp, whence we immediately started for Mapimi.

As a punishment for his carelessness and meditated treachery, I obliged the mozo to ride bare-backed the whole distance of nearly sixty miles, and at a round trot. This feat of equitation, which on the straight and razor-like back of an ill-conditioned mule is anything but an easy or comfortable process, elicited from Angel, during his ride, a series of the most pathetic laments on his miserable fate in serving so merciless a master, accompanied by supplications to be allowed to mount the horse which carried his saddle and ran loose. But I was obdurate. He was the undoubted cause, by not having watched the animals, as was his duty, of the delay and loss of time I had suffered, and therefore, as a warning, and as a matter of justice, I administered this salutary dose of "Lynch law," which I have no doubt he remembers to the present moment.

About midday we reached the hacienda de la Cadena, first passing a vidette stationed on a neighbouring hill, on the look-out for the Indians. The hacienda itself was closed, and men were ready on the azoteas with guns and bows and arrows, when the approach of strangers was announced by signal from the ranchero on the hill. Just outside the gates were erected several crosses, with their little piles of stones, on which were roughly-cut inscriptions; they were all to the memory of those who had been killed on the spot by Indians.

We stayed at La Cadena merely to water our beasts, the people shouting from the housetop, and asking if we were mad, to travel alone. Angel, to whom I had again intrusted a carbine, answered by striking his hand on the butt of his piece, and vociferating, "Miren ustedes: somos valientes, que importan los carajos Comanches. Que vengan, y yo los mataré."—Look here: we are brave men, and don't care a straw for the rascally Comanches. Only let them come, and I will kill them myself. —And the muchachas waved their rebosos, and saluted the "valiente," shouting, "Adios, buen mozo! mate a los barbaros!"—God keep you, brave lad! kill the savages. At which Angel waved his gun, in a state of great excitement and present valour, which cooled amazingly when we were out of sight of the hacienda and amongst the dreary chaparrales.

It was ten at night when we reached Mapimi; and, losing the track, we got bewildered in the darkness, and wandered into a marsh outside the town, the lights of which were apparently quite close at hand: but all our shouting and cries for assistance and a guide were in vain, and caused the inhabitants to barricade their doors, as they thought the Indians were upon them; which panic was probably increased, when at last, guessing at the cause, and *almost* losing my temper, I gave a succession of most correct war-whoops as I floundered through the mud, and fired a volley at the same moment. When, therefore, I at length extricated myself and entered the town, not a living soul was visible, and the lights all extinguished; so, groping my way to the plaza, at one side of which trickled a little stream, I unpacked my mules and encamped, sending the mozo with a costal for a supply of corn for the animals, with which he presently returned, reporting at the same time that the people were half dead with terror. The mules and horses properly cared for, I rolled myself in my blanket in the middle of the street, and went supperless to sleep, after a ride of sixty-five miles.

El Real de Mapimi is situated on a plain at the foot of a mountain called, from its supposed resemblance to a purse, the Bolson de Mapimi. The sierras, which surround the plain, teem with the precious metals; but for some reason, probably from its situation near the frontier, and its exposure to Indian attacks, they have never been properly worked. The mine near the town, and the hacienda de beneficios, belong to an inhabitant of Mapimi, who, without capital or machinery, derives a considerable income even from the primitive method employed in working the mine, which produces gold, silver, lead, and sulphur from the same sierra. My impression is, that the mines of Mapimi, if properly worked, would be the most productive in the country; and the transportation of machinery, by way of the Rio Grande and Monclova, would be practicable, and attended with comparatively little expense. The town itself is merely a collection of adobe houses, and, with the exception of a cotton-factory,* the superintendent of which is an Englishman, possesses no trade of any description. The population, of between two and three thousand, live in constant dread of the Indians, who lately entered the town and carried off the mulada belonging to the hacienda de beneficios out of the very corrals. The surrounding country is sterile and uninhabited; the villages and ranchos have been deserted, and the fields laid waste by the savages. Between Mapimi and Chihuahua is a large unpeopled tract of country called the *travesia:* it once possessed several thriving villages and ranchos, now deserted and in ruins, where the Indians resort during their incursions, and leave their tired animals to be recruited in the pastures which have sprung up on the once cultivated fields, removing them on their return. A road from Mapimi, now disused for years and overgrown with grass, leads to Chihuahua through these deserted villages, and I determined to follow it, in spite of the bad character assigned to it by the Mexicans on account of its being so much frequented by the Comanches.

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* In the gardens of the factory at Mapimi I noticed several tea-plants, which thrive in this climate and soil, and the leaves of which, I was informed, are of very tolerable flavour.

Here I gave my mozo, Angel, his congé, and picked up, much to my astonishment, a little Irishman, who had been eighteen years in Mexico, during which time he had passed over nearly the whole republic, excepting New Mexico. He had lost all traces of his Milesian descent, being in character, manners, and appearance a perfect Mexican, and had almost forgotten his own language. Indians moreover had no terrors for him, and he at once agreed to accompany me to Chihuahua, even by way of the travesia, "for," said he, "the Indian isn't born who will take my scalp."

During my stay in Mapimi I encamped in the middle of the plaza, much to the gratification of the *peládos** of the town, who constantly surrounded me, pilfering everything which lay exposed. My reason for preferring the open air, even of a street, was the absence of vermin, which in the houses actually devour the full-blooded Européo. The evening before our departure a deputation waited upon me to dissuade me from attempting to cross the travesia to Chihuahua. The alcalde even went as far as to say that my new mozo, who was a Mexican citizen, should not be allowed to leave the town; but this I at once overcame by exhibiting my formidable-looking passports and cartas de securidad, or letters of security. They asked how I could expect to escape the Indians? I pointed to my rifle. "Valgame en Dios!" was the rejoinder; "que loco es este Yngles!"—What a madman this Englishman is!

One event occurred in Mapimi which annoyed me excessively. The night of my arrival, my animals, I fear, were rather scantily supplied with corn; and, to revenge the slight, the mules ate the tail of my beautiful Panchito to the very dock—a tail which I had tied, and combed, and tended with the greatest care and affection. In the morning I hardly recognised the animal; his once ornamental appendage looked as if it had been gnawed by rats, and his whole appearance was disfigured. I got a pair of shears, and clipped and cut, but only made matters worse, and was fain to desist after an hour's attempt. The tails of the mules were at the end of my journey picked like a bone, for, whenever their supper was poor, they immediately fell to work on each other's tails.

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* Peládo, literally skinless, meaning, in Mexico, the ragged, coatless vagabonds who loaf about the towns and villages.

A perfect levee was held round my camp, which, being in the open square, of course was exposed enough. In this obtrusion, and the pertinacity with which they maintain it, the Mexicans are infinitely more annoying than the Indians themselves. Wrapped in their sarapes, they used to surround my fire, even when I was eating my meals, staring at my every action, and without saying a word. A peládo would remain thus motionless for two or three hours, when he would retire for the purpose of eating his dinner, returning after it, and taking up the same position. No hints were strong enough, and no rebuffs had any effect in abating the nuisance: but, frequently losing all temper and patience, I rattled out at them in pretty hearty abuse. Then they would move off, muttering, "Que sin vergüenza!"—What a shameless, unmannered fellow is this!

When eating, I found that the most efficacious way of getting rid of them was by making use of the "invitation" which Spaniards invariably proffer to strangers of any class before commencing a meal: "Ustedes gustan?" I would ask; and, strangely enough, nothing seemed to insult them more than this. Without the usual answer of "Mil gracias; buen provecho tenga usted" (a thousand thanks; may your worship have a good appetite), they invariably slunk away without answering.

CHAPTER XVII.

Leave Mapimi—The Travesia—Deserted Village—Arroyo de los Indios—Fresh "Sign"—Salitrose Spring—Strike Settlements—Lost Americans—Their Sufferings—The Camblet Cloak—Don Augustin Garcia—Expedition to Sierra del Diablo—Indian Sign—Dangerous Camp—Return to Guajoquilla—Novedades—A Fix—Kit stolen—Thieves taken—The Scavenger's Daughter—Holy Child of Atocha—Convincing Proof—Cocinera's Penance.

On the 23rd I left Mapimi, the whole population, I do believe, turning out to see me put my head in the lion's mouth. For thirty-six miles we travelled through an arid chapparal; when, towards sunset, we entered into a more open plain, where we saw the ruined houses of Jarral Grande. The houses had been built round a large open space covered with grass, each one standing in a garden. At the entrance of the village, and scattered along the road, was a perfect forest of crosses, many of them thrown down or mutilated by the Indians. The houses were most of them tumbling to pieces, but some were still entire. The gardens, overrun with a wilderness of weeds, still contained flowers, and melon-vines crept from the enclosures out into the green. In one house that I entered a hare was sitting on the threshold, and some leverets were inside; and on the flat azotea of another sat a large cat. The walls, too, of the ruined houses were covered with creepers, which hung from the broken roofs and about the floors.

I entered another house, which, from its size and appearance, had evidently been the abode of the priest or chief personage of the village. The remains of a recent fire were scattered about the floor, on which were strewed several Indian xuages or drinking-gourds, an arrow, and a human scalp. The Indians had very lately visited the village, and some of them had doubtless taken up their abode in this house, and perhaps, departing before daylight, had left these articles behind them.

There were several cats about the ruins; and, as I entered, four or five enormous ones jumped off a wall where they lay basking in the sun, and concealed themselves in the tangled weeds.

The sun set beauteously on this lonely scene. In the distance, the ragged outline of the sierra was golden with its declining rays, which shed a soft light on the ruins of the village; and everything looked so calm and beautiful, that it was difficult to call to mind that this was once the scene of horrid barbarities.

We took the animals down to the arroyo near the village, and, rifle in hand, watched them as they drank. In the sand at the edge of the stream were numerous marks of horses' feet and moccasin-tracks fresh and recent. The Indians had been there that morning, and might very probably return, so it behoved us to be on the watch. We therefore picqueted the mules and horses in the open space in the middle of the village, while we ourselves retreated to the shelter and shadow of a house within pistol-shot, whence we could command all the approaches to the green without being ourselves seen; one standing sentry while the other slept. In the night a number of perfectly wild cattle entered the village, and nearly caused our animals to stampede. One fat young heifer approached to within a few feet of where I was lying watching under a wall, and very nearly tempted me to a shot. Little rest we had that night; and long before daylight, that being the hour when Indians make their attacks, we were up and on the alert.

We were in our saddles before sunrise, and with great difficulty made our way in the dark through the thick chaparral. On approaching a stream called Arroyo de los Indios, or Indian River, I had been warned to be on the look-out, as that stream was a favourite stopping-place of the Indians. We crossed near where a broad and freshly-used Indian trail entered it, and halted some distance up the stream from the ford. There were deep holes of the clearest and coldest water in the arroyo, and I enjoyed a most delicious bathe. My animals were picqueted, and fared badly, the grass being coarse and sparsely scattered amongst the bushes.

We had another night of watchfulness, or rather half a night, for shortly after midnight we again packed the mules and started. This I did on account of the greater security of travelling at night, and in order to reach Jarral Chiquito, if possible, before sunrise, when, if Indians had been encamped there, as was more than probable, we might escape before we were observed. The distance from Jarral Grande to Arroyo de los Indios was forty miles, and from that river to Jarral Chiquito, or Little Jarral, the same. The latter place was also a noted stopping-place of the Indians, and my servant had made up his mind that there we should have some work. To do him justice, however, he was nothing loth, and behaved remarkably well all through this dangerous journey. The sun rose magnificently behind us just before we reached Jarral; and, turning in my saddle, I saw Harry looking hard at it with shaded eyes.

"What's the matter?" I sang out.

"Look, sir—look at the sun rise," he answered: "perhaps we may never have another chance, Don Jorge. I never saw it look so beautiful before."

The plains here abounded in deer, and a bird of the pheasant species called *faisan*, and corrupted into *paisano* by the lower classes.

We reached Jarral Chiquito shortly after sunrise, and I rode on to reconnoitre. No Indians were there, but plenty of "sign." The village was situated on a hill, near a small spring of salitose water, round which grows a clump of cotton-woods, a species of poplar (alamo). The village had been entirely burned by the Indians, with the exception of one house which was still standing, the roof of which they had torn off, and from the upper walls had shot down with arrows all the inmates. Inside were the skeleton of a dog and several human bones. A dreary stillness reigned over the whole place, unbroken by any sound, save the croaking of a bullfrog in the spring, round which we encamped for a few hours. At noon we again started, and travelled on till nearly dark, when we encamped in the middle of a bare plain, without water for the animals, or wood with which to make a fire. The grass, also, was thin, and the poor beasts fared badly, after a journey of more than sixty miles within twenty-four hours. In the night I saw a fire some distance from us, but apparently on the same plain. It was doubtless an encampment of a large party of Indians who passed Guajoquilla the very day of my arrival there.

On the 26th at daybreak we were packed and off, and, after a journey of forty miles, to our great satisfaction we struck the settlements of Guajoquilla. Before entering the town we crossed a large milpa, where the people were busy cutting and carrying the maize. My sudden appearance put them to flight, and men, women, and children rushed like rabbits to the cover of the maize-canes. They mistook me for an Indian, as I was dressed in a hunting-shirt and fringed leggings; and as the Comanches had passed that very morning, killing some of the labourers in the field, they were justified in their alarm.

Guajoquilla* is a pretty, quaint little town, with its white-washed adobe houses, and looking clean and neat. The arrival of strangers, and in such an extraordinary garb, and moreover evidently from the travesia and Mapimi, created no little sensation. The people flocked round me, inquiring the novedades, and how I had escaped the Indians. Hundreds of houses were placed at my disposal, but, as few of them contained stables or corrals, I rode into a street near the plaza, and, seeing a respectable old dame sitting at a large gate which led to a corral, I invited myself to take up my abode with her, which, with a thousand protestations, she instantly agreed to. I had hardly dismounted when a tall gaunt figure elbowed its way through the admiring crowd, and, seizing my hand, exclaimed, "Thank God, here's a countryman at last!" and burst into tears. Regarding him with astonishment, I perceived at once that he was an American, and, by his dress of well-worn homespun, evidently a Missourian, and one of the teamsters who accompany the Santa Fé caravans from the United States. He quickly told me his story. He was one of the twenty-one Americans who, as I have before mentioned, left Mr. Spiers' caravan some thirty or forty days before, intending to proceed across the country to the United States, by way of Texas. They had purchased horses and mules at the hacienda of La Sarca; and, without a guide, and knowing nothing of the nature of the country they had to traverse, had entered a tract between the Bolson of Mapimi and the sierras of El Diablo, which is entirely destitute of game and water. Here their animals had nearly all died; and themselves, separating in small parties, had vainly searched for water, remaining for eight days with no other sustenance than the blood of mules, and reduced to the most revolting extremities to assuage their burning thirst. The man before me and another had found their way to a hole of water after several days' travel, near which some pastores (shepherds) were tending a large flock of sheep, and these men had brought them into Guajoquilla. According to his account, the others must long ere this have perished, for when he left them they were prostrate on the ground, unable to rise, and praying for death. In the hope of recovering some of their effects, his companion, after recruiting his strength, had started back to the spot with some Mexicans, but, meeting a party of Comanches, they had returned without reaching the place. The next day, however, some vaqueros entered the town bearing six or seven Americans behind their saddles, and towards the evening two more were brought in, making eleven in all who had arrived. Such miserable, emaciated creatures it has never been my lot to see. With long hair and beards, and thin cadaverous faces, with the cheek-bones projecting almost through the skin, and their mouths cracked with the drought, they dismounted before my door, weak and scarcely able to stand; most of them had entirely lost their voices, and some were giddy and light-headed with the sufferings they had endured. From their account I had no doubt that ten of their party were perishing in the sierra, or most probably had already expired; for they were entirely exhausted when the last of those who had arrived left the spot where they had been lying. After ordering my servant to make a large quantity of strong soup for the poor fellows, and providing for their immediate wants, I proceeded to the alcalde of the place, and told him the story. He at once agreed with me that some steps must be taken to rescue the sufferers if still alive, but he doubted if the people in the town would undertake the expedition, as it was known that the Indians were in the sierras, and in fact in every part, and it was a perfect miracle how the men had reached the town in safety. He also promised me that the men should not be confined, but allowed to go at large on parole, until he had communicated with the governor of Chihuahua, and that a large room should be provided for them, where they would be at perfect liberty.

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* Cotton is cultivated here, and thrives exceedingly well, as also in the valley of the Nazas.

One of these men, a lean and lank Kentuckian, who, rawboned at any time, was now a perfect skeleton, came up to me, and in a whisper, for his voice was lost for a time, requested to consult me on an important matter. The appearance of the poor fellow was comical in the extreme. His long black hair was combed over his face and forehead, and hung down his back and over his shoulders; and his features, with cheek-bones almost protruding from the skin, wore an indescribably serio-comic expression. He was, in fact, what his appearance indicated, a "Puritan," and his words drawled out of his throat like fathoms of cable, or the sermon of a methodist preacher.

"Stranger," he said to me, "you have been about the world, I guess, and ar a likely to know. What," he asked, putting his face close to mine, "might be the worth in your country of a camlet cloak? I never see sich a cloak as that ar one in no parts," he continued, looking up into the sky as if the spectre of the camlet cloak was there. "I've worn that ar cloak more nor ten year, lined right away through with the best kind of bleachin. Stranger," he continued, "it's a bad fix them poor boys is in, away out thar in them darned dried-up hills, and it jest doubles me up to think on it. Now, I want to know what's the worth of such a fixin as that ar camlet cloak?" I answered that I could not possibly tell, knowing nothing about such matters. "Well, stranger, all I ar got to say is this,—thar aint sech another cloak as that between this and Louisville, anyhow you can fix it, and I want to know if the govner here will send out to them hills to bring in that ar camlet cloak. It lays jest whar we left them poor boys." I told him that, although I did not think the "governor" would exactly send out a detachment in search of his cloak, yet I had no doubt but that some steps would be taken to rescue the unfortunate men who were left in the sierras, and that if I went myself I would endeavour to recover it for him. This calmed him considerably, and, taking me by the arm, he said solemnly, "Stranger, I'll thank you for that;" and, turning away, I heard him soliloquizing—"Sech a cloak as that ar aint nowhere between this and Louisville."

The owner of the lost garment volunteered to accompany me in search of the missing men, for whose recovery he said he would give all he had, even the "camlet cloak;" and I found him the best man of the party. During the journey he rode by my side, the whole subject of his discourse being the merits of the wonderful garment. As we drew near the spot where he had left it, his excitement became intense. He speculated as to how it was lying—was it folded up?—had the rain injured it? &c.; and at last (he had been riding for some time with his head bent forward, and his eyes almost starting from his head), he darted suddenly on, jumped from his horse, and seized upon something lying on the ground. Holding up to my view an old tattered benjamin, with a catskin collar, and its original blue stained to a hundred different hues, he exultingly exclaimed,—"Stranger, h'yar's the darned old cloak: hurraw for my old camlet cloak!—but darn it, whar's them poor bhoys?"

Determined to go myself in search of the Americans, I beat up for volunteers, and soon got four or five rancheros, who were mounted and armed by the prefect, to agree to accompany me. Eight of the Americans were also sufficiently recovered the next day to be of the party; and about noon we started, sixteen in number, well armed and mounted. The alcalde, before we left, informed the Americans that, although prisoners, he did not hesitate to allow them to proceed under my command, as I had made myself answerable for their return.

Taking an easterly course, we crossed a sierra, and entered upon a broken country dotted with groves of mezquit and palms, and intersected by numerous ravines and cañons. About ten at night we halted for an hour to allow our horses to feed on the damp grass, as there was no water, and afterwards continued our journey at as rapid a rate as the nature of the country would admit. All night we passed through a wild and perfectly desert tract, crossing rough sierras and deep ravines. A large and recent Indian trail crossed the country from north to south, which my Mexican guide said was the main road of the Comanches into the interior. At sunrise we reached a little hole of water, and a few feet beyond it lay the body of a mule which two of the Americans had killed for its blood, not knowing that water was within a few feet of them. No sooner had they gorged themselves with the hot blood than they discovered the pool, but were so sickened with their previous draught as to be unable to drink. Here we allowed our animals to fill themselves, and immediately rode on without resting. The country became still more broken, and deer were very plentiful. I tumbled over one splendid buck, as he jumped out of a cañon through which we were passing, but we were in too great a hurry to stop to take any of the meat.

Towards evening, after travelling rapidly all the day, we approached the spot where the Americans had left their companions, and I caused the party to separate and spread out, to look for tracks of men or horses. Shortly after one of them stopped and called me to his side. He had discovered the body of a horse which they had left alive when they had last seen their companions. Its swollen tongue and body showed that the poor animal had died from excessive thirst, and was a bad omen of our finding the men alive. A few yards farther on lay another, which had died from the same cause. Presently we reached the spot, and found guns, and blankets, and ammunition, but no signs of the lost men. The ground, hard and rocky, afforded no clue to the course they had followed, but it was evident that they must have taken an opposite course to that from which we had just come, or we must have seen their tracks in the plains. The horses had been dead at least three days, and had evidently been turned loose to shift for themselves, as they were without ropes. No doubt remained in my mind as to their fate. The sierra, with the exception of the hole where we watered our animals, was destitute of water, and in the direction we imagined them to have taken, the country was still more arid, where, if they escaped a miserable death from starvation, they would in all probability encounter an equally certain one at the hands of the Indians.

I learned afterwards, from a Mexican woman who had been carried a prisoner through this very sierra by the Comanches, and afterwards purchased from them by an Indian trader, that, in passing through this desert track, the Indians are four days and nights without water for their animals, hundreds of which perish on the road.

After an ineffectual search we were obliged to turn back, as our animals had been nearly thirty hours without eating, and were almost exhausted; and here there was no grass or herbage of any description. Our guide now recommended that we should strike a new course, and, instead of returning by the way we came, should cross the sierra by a gap known as the Puerta del Jabali—the gate of the wild boar; and by this route we might that night reach an old deserted rancho, where was good grass, and water for the tired animals. Striking off to the gap, we passed a wide cañon, full of high grass, and literally swarming with deer. As all our provisions were exhausted, I rode ahead and killed a fine doe, which one of the Mexicans threw over his saddle. It was not till late in the night that we reached the old rancho; and at the spring we found several Indian horses, with their backs still wet from the saddle, drinking, while others were feeding around. From the sign I knew that the Indians had been about since sundown, that they had probably left their tired animals here, and would return in the morning, or perhaps during the night. It was necessary therefore to be watchful. The alamos round the spring of water were black with ravens and crows which were roosting in the branches, and one of the Americans thoughtlessly discharged his rifle at them, which set all the Indian horses scampering off, and greatly annoyed me, as I had intended to have secured them. It might also have had the effect of bringing the Indians upon us, if they were in the neighbourhood, as probably they were. I remained "alerto" all night, having two Mexicans on sentry at the same time. The Americans lay snoring round a huge fire, and, being very tired, I did not require them to stand guard. As I was going my rounds I saw a figure crawling on the ground between me and the ruined walls of a house some two hundred yards distant. Assured that it could be no other than an Indian, I threw myself on the ground, and "approached" it, as the hunters say, cautiously and without noise. The figure was also "approaching" me, and we gradually drew near each other; and I then perceived what I imagined to be an Indian in the very act of drawing his bow upon me. My rifle was instantly at my shoulder, and in another moment would have discharged its contents, when the figure rose on its legs and cried out, "No tire, no tire, por dios; soy amigo"—don't fire; I'm a friend;—and I saw, sure enough, that it was one of the Mexicans, but, dressed in a brown sarape, and with his long black hair and dark face, and armed with bow and arrow, he might easily be mistaken for an Indian.

About four in the afternoon next day we rode into Guajoquilla, and, before I had dismounted, Don Augustin Garcia, the prefect, followed by a crowd, accosted me:—

"Que novedades?" he asked. "Nothing," I answered.

"Pues aqui tiene usted muchas—well, here we have plenty of bad news for you. The robbers have broken into your room, and stolen all your baggage."

"Pues," I answered, "si no hay remedio—if it can't be helped, it can't."

My servant now made his appearance, with a face as white as a sheet; I had given him strict orders, when I started, on no account to leave the house until my return. The night before, however, he had been induced by the robbers to go to a fandango, where they locked him in a room for several hours with a party of men and women drinking and dancing. When he returned to the house he found the door of my room, which was entered from the street, open, and, thinking that I had returned, he went into the house, and, awakening the women, asked them when I had come back. They told him that I was not yet returned, and he replied, "He must be, for his door was wide open."

At this out jumped the patrona from her bed: "Ladrones! ladrones!" she cried out, instantly guessing what had happened. Striking a light, the whole household entered my room, and found it stripped of everything. They had actually carried off the matting of my packsaddles; trunks and saddles, guns, pistols, sword, and all were gone; and in one of the packs were some three thousand dollars, so they had made a good night's work of it. My servant was in despair; his first idea was to run, for I would kill him, he said, as soon as I arrived. The old patrona did not lose her presence of mind; she rushed to her sala, and snatched from the wall a little image of el Niño de Atocha, a juvenile saint of extraordinary virtue. Seizing my distracted mozo by the shoulders, she forced him on his knees, and, surrounded by all the women of the family, vowed to the uplifted saint three masses, the cook on her part a penance, and my servant a mass likewise, if the stolen goods were recovered, besides scores of Pater Nosters, dozens of Ave Marias, &c. &c. Having done this, as she told me when giving a history of the affair, her heart became calm; the blessed child of Atocha had never deserted her, a lone widow, with only a *buellada* of two hundred cattle to depend upon, and her husband killed by the barbaros; and she felt assured that by the saint's means the things would be recovered. "The scandal, she said, the 'infamia' of the robbery taking place in her house!" and a stranger too to be plundered, "lejos de su patria y sus amigos; ay que lastima, que infamia!"—far from his country and his friends; what an atrocity!

The prefect, Don Augustin, was soon on the scent; one man was already suspected, who had been seen in front of the house late on the night of the robbery, and, passing by frequently, had attracted the attention of my patrona. My mozo, pistol in hand, went to the house of this man and collared him, and when I arrived had already lodged him in the calaboza. Two others were shortly after taken on suspicion of being accomplices.

"No hay cuidado—there is no fear," said Don Augustin; "we 'll get everything back; I have put them to the torture, and they have already confessed to the robbery."

My servant, who witnessed the operation, said it was beautiful to see the prefect screwing a confession out of them. Their necks and feet were placed in two different holes, which, by means of a screw, were brought together until every muscle of the body and limbs was in a frightful state of tension, and the bones almost dislocated. At length they divulged where one trunk was concealed, and then another, and after two or three faintings, one article after another was brought to light. In the intervals the prefect rushed to me, wiping the perspiration from his forehead.

"No hay cuidado, no hay cuidado; we'll have everything out of them. They have just now fainted off, but when they recover they shall be popped in again."

At last everything was recovered but a small dirk-knife with a mother-of-pearl handle, which defied screwing, and I begged Don Augustin not to trouble himself about it, as everything else was safe. But "No," he said, "No hay cuidado, no hay cuidado; we 'll have everything out of them; strangers must not be robbed with impunity in my prefecture." However, it took another violent screw, and the poor wretch, with eyes starting out of his head, cried out at last to stop, and pulled out of his pocket the missing knife, which he had doubtless determined to keep, on the principle of having "something for his money."

The chief delinquent was the priest's nephew, and most of the stolen property was concealed in the reverend gentleman's garden. To do him justice, however, the padre was very active in his attempts to recover my property, and stood by his nephew, when under the process of the screw, to exhort him to confession, or administer extreme unction if it was necessary.

When everything had been brought back, my good old patrona rushed to me with el Santo Niño de Atocha, which she begged of me to kiss, at the same time hanging it in my room to protect it from another spoliation. That evening I was sitting at the door, enjoying a chat with the señoritas de la casa, and a cigarro, when I saw a figure, or rather the trunk, of a woman, moving along on what appeared to be the stumps of legs, enveloped in a cloud of dust, as she slowly crept along the road. She passed three or four times, going and returning upwards of a hundred yards, and earnestly praying the while. "Por Dios," I asked of one of the girls—"for God's sake, what's this?"

"Es Dolores, la concinera"—it's Dolores, the cook—performing penance, was the answer; and her vow instantly recurred to me. The poor old body had vowed to walk so many hundred yards on her knees in the public streets, repeating at the same time a certain number of Ave Marias, if the credit of the family was restored by the discovery of the thief and the recovery of my property.

I had a large pot of soup kept always on the fire, to which the half-starved Americans had access whenever they felt inclined, and, as I was sitting at the door, several of them passed into the house, brushing by the muchachas without the usual "con su licencia," much to the indignation of the ladies.

It is a general impression amongst the lower classes in Mexico, that the Americans are half savages, and perfectly uncivilized. The specimens they see in Northern Mexico are certainly not remarkably polished in manners or appearance, being generally rough backwoodsmen from Missouri. They go by the name of "burros,"—jackasses; and have the reputation of being infidels who worship the devil, &c. I was trying to explain to my female friends that the Americans were a very civilized people, and a great portion of them of the same religion as their own, but they scouted the idea; the priests had told them the contrary, and now they saw with their own eyes that they were burros.

"Ni, saludan las mugeres!" indignantly exclaimed a dark beauty, as a conclusive argument—they do not even salute the women when they pass—as, just at that moment, a Missourian, six feet high in his mocassins, stepped over her head as she sat on the sill of the gate.

"Ni saludan las mugeres," she repeated; "you see it yourself. Ah, no, por Dios, son burros, y muy sin vergüenzas"—they are jackasses, and entirely without shame. "Valgame Dios, que hombres tan fieros!"—what wild men they are!

In the northern part of Mexico beds are unknown in the ranchos, and even in the houses of respectable people. A species of mattress is spread upon the floor at night, on which the sheets and mantas are laid, and in the daytime is rolled up against the wall, and, neatly folded and covered with a gay manta, forms a settee or sofa. Chairs are not used, and at meals the dishes are placed on the ground, and the guests sit round in Indian fashion, and dip their tortillas into the dish. A triangular piece of tortilla is converted into a spoon, and soup even is eaten in this way. Spoons are seldom met with even in the houses of the ricos, the use of the tortilla being universal.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Leave Guajoquilla—Bivouac of Mexican Soldiers—Mexican Surprise—Kill an Antelope—Santa Rosalia—Taken for a Spy—Las Animas—Los Sancillos—Indian Miner—Legend of the "Black Vein of Sombrerete"—Hospitality (?)—The Alazan—Fugitives from Chihuahua—Bernardo the Bullfighter—In Sight of Chihuahua.

ON the 3rd of November I left Guajoquilla, under the escort of ten thousand blessings heaped upon me by my kind-hearted hostess and her family, and under the especial protection of the "holy infant of Atocha." We left after dark, as, on account of the novedades, it was deemed not only prudent, but indispensable to safety, to travel in the night. About two in the morning I was riding along muffled in my sarape, for it was piercingly cold, and half asleep at the time, when I descried ahead of me several camp-fires a little off the road. I at once set them down as Indians, as they had been seen the previous day between Guajoquilla and La Remada, and instantly stopped the cavallada. Dismounting, I took my rifle, and approached to reconnoitre, creeping up to within a few yards of the fire, where lay snoring a picquet of soldiers, while a large body lay bivouacked around. I now remembered that a detachment was out, under the command of one Colonel Amendares, a noted matador de Indios, for the purpose of surprising a body of Indians which had passed the Conchos, and would probably return by this route. Their anxiety to *surprise* the Indians was evident by the position they had chosen for their ambuscade, being bivouacked in the very middle of the Indian road, and under a high ridge of hills, over which the Indians had to pass, and from whence they could not fail to discover their position. When I regained my horse, and passed close to their fires, I saluted them with a war-whoop which threw the whole camp into a ferment. A little after sunrise we reached the rancho of La Remada, where was a detachment of troops to protect the people from the Indians; and we halted here, to feed the animals, for two or three hours, after which we resumed our journey to Santa Rosalia. Just before entering the town I killed an antelope in the road. The animal ran to within a hundred yards of my horse, when it stopped and looked at me, giving me time to knock it over from my saddle.

Santa Rosalia is a little dirty place, and has been selected by the Governor of Chihuahua as a point to be defended against the anticipated advance of the Americans. With this object they were busily engaged throwing up walls and parapets, and cutting ditches; but all their work could not convert it into a tenable position.

I put up in the house of an American who has a little "dry-goods" store in the town, and in the middle of the night was called up by a violent knocking at the gate. As the mob had been talking of revenging themselves for the defeat sustained by the Mexican troops at Monterey the other day, by sacking the two unfortunate little stores belonging to Americans, my host thought his time was come, but, resolving to die game, came to me to assist in defending the house. We therefore carried all the arms into the store, and placed them on the counter, which served as a parapet for our bodies. The door of the shop opened into the street, and behind it we could hear the clanking of swords and other warlike noises. Presently a loud knock, and a voice exclaimed "Abra la puerta."

"Quien es?" I asked—Who is it? No answer; but "Abra la puerta!"—open the door—was repeated. However, finding that we paid no attention to the request, another summons was tried, with the addition of "En el nombre del General—in the name of the General—who has sent me, his ayudante, to speak with the master of this house." With this "open sesame" we unbarred the door to the General's aide-de-camp, a ferocious-looking individual with enormous moustache and clattering sabre.

"Where," he asked, in an authoritative voice, "is this American spy who entered the town to-day and concealed himself in this house?" No answer. Question repeated with like effect. The moustached hero grinned with rage, and turned to his followers, saying, "You see this;" and then, turning to us, said, "It is the General's order that every foreigner in this house immediately attend at his quarters, where you will answer for harbouring a spy," turning to the master of the house.

We speedily donned our clothes, and appeared at the house of the General, who was sitting in a room waiting our arrival. Without waiting for any explanation, I immediately presented my credentials, saying, "Hi tiene usted, mi General, mis pasapuertas y carta de securidad," which, to the dissatisfaction of the ayudante, after glancing at, he returned with a low bow, and many apologies for disturbing me at so late an hour.

It happened to be the feast of Las Animas, when money is collected by the priests for the purpose of praying souls out of purgatory, which on this day is done by wholesale. If money is not to be had, the collectors, usually children, with little boxes which have holes in which the coin is dropped, receive corn or beans; the contribution of my landlord being a couple of tallow candles, which no doubt were efficacious in getting some unhappy soul out of several years' pawn, and perhaps were useful in greasing the way, as the donor remarked, to the exit of some orthodox pelàdo.

Leaving Santa Rosalia on the 5th, we proceeded to Los Saucillos, a small Indian village, the population of which is entirely employed in mining on their own account. It is situated on the Conchos, here a broad but shallow stream, which runs into the Del Norte above the presidio of that name: this village is thirty-six miles from Santa Rosalia. The gambucinos, or independent miners, are a class *sui generis*. Their gains depend entirely upon the bonanza, or the chance of striking a rich vein, which, with their system of grubbing and pickaxing at random, is a rare event. Still they work on year after year, with the golden vision of a bonanza ever before their eyes, which will at once raise them to comparative wealth; and, stimulated by the hope, abandon all other labour for the speculative toil of mining. Thus, in these petty *reales*,* a scarcity of provisions, and even of the necessaries of life, is very apparent. The gambucinos are glad to sell their pieces of ore, and even pure metal, for coin considerably less than their value; and the traveller is frequently offered little dumps of silver, and even gold, in exchange for money or articles of clothing.

In this village there was a large empty hacienda de beneficios, full of scoriæ and dross, which covered the floor in heaps, with tumble-down furnaces and mouldering apparatus long disused. Here I took up my abode, with the permission of an old Indian, who, perfectly naked save by a small piece of leather round his loins, was superintending some smelting process in a furnace in one corner of the building. There was abundance of room for myself and animals, who ate their corn out of the washing-troughs, and my supper was cooked on a little fire of charcoal made on the ground, the old Indian joining me in the repast, and telling me long stories of the former riches of the mine, and the hundred times that he had been on the point of securing bonanzas. He was, he told me, the most scientific man in the place, knew the probable value of a lode at first sight, and was muy aficionado a los beneficios—very expert in the process of extracting metal from ore. There had been a time when he made his two and three dollars a-day, and ore was plentiful; but now the sierras were full of "mala gente"—demons and bad spirits—who snatched out of their fingers all the metal. He knew a mountain, where one had only to strike his pickaxe and grub up virgin silver at every blow; but it was presided over by a "demonio," whose heart was hard as granite, and who changed the silver into lead when a gambucino made his appearance. Other sierras there were, he said, muy lejos—very far off—where he had been with his father when a boy, and procured much silver; but, shortly after, the Indians made their appearance in that country and killed all they found at work, and they had never been revisited. Tierra muy rica, y llena de plata—a very rich country it was, and full of silver.

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* Mines were, and are still called reales—royal—being, in the time of the Spaniards, the property of the crown.

He had, he told me, in his youth worked in the mine of Sombrerete, and had earned many a dollar in the bonanzas of the celebrated Veta Negra, the black vein (a lode of metal which yielded an extraordinary quantity of silver). He stayed at Sombrerete until this lode was worked out, and the cause of its failure he narrated to me in the following wonderful story, which he related with the utmost gravity and most perfect seriousness. His gesticulations, and the solemn asseverations of the truth of the story with which he frequently interrupted it, greatly amused me; and perhaps no more appropriate locale for the narration of such a tale could be found, than the spot in which we then were sitting. In the large vaulted building, with its earthen walls covered with mould, and deep recesses, into which the blaze from the fire scarcely penetrated, the old Indian sat cowering over the fire, his sharp, attenuated features lit up with animation as he narrated his story, stopping occasionally to puff from his mouth and nose a cloud of tobacco-smoke, and drawing round his naked figure a tattered blanket, as a cold blast of wind rushed through chinks in the dilapidated wall. In nearly these words he repeated

THE LEGEND OF THE BLACK VEIN OF SOMBRERETE ("LA VETA NEGRA DE SOMBRERETE").

"Ojala por los dias de oro!—oh for the days of gold"—sighed the old gambucino: "pero ya se acabó todo eso—but *that* is all over now; ni oro, ni plata hay—neither gold nor silver is to be had now-a-days for picking or digging. Pedazitos, no mas—little bits one grubs up here and there; pero *se acabó la veta negra*—but the black vein, the black vein; onde esta?—where is it? Worked out long ago.

"I was no older than your worship in those days, and my back was strong. Valgame madre santissima! but I could pack the ore nimbly in the mine and up the shaft. Ay, and *then* all worked with a will, for it was all *bonanza:* day after day, month after month, year after year, there we were at the same old vein; and the more we cut into it the richer it grew. Ay que plata! Oh what silver came out of that old vein! blanco, rico, pesado—white, rich, and heavy it was—all silver, all silver. Five hundred pesos fuertes I made in one week. *Que hermosita era aquella veta negra!*—what a beautiful little vein was that black one!

"But your worship yawns, and my poor old head turns round when it thinks of that time. Pues, señor. All the miners (for there were no gambucinos then) were making dollars as fast as they could, but the more they got the more they wanted, although not one of the laziest but had more than he ever before had dreamed of possessing. However, they were not satisfied, and all complained because they did not strike a richer vein than the old veta negra—as if that was possible!

"The most dissatisfied of all the miners was a little deformed man called Pepito, who did nothing but swear at and curse his bad luck, although he had made enough money to last three of his lives; and the miserly style in which he lived was the by-word of everybody.

"However, whether it was from a bitterness of spirit caused by his deformity, or from genuine badness of heart, Pepito was continually grumbling at the old vein, calling it by every opprobrious epithet which he could summon to the end of his tongue, and which was enough to break the heart of any vein, even of iron.

"One night—it was the fiesta of San Lorenzo—all the miners were away in the town, for they had agreed to give themselves a holiday; but Pepito took his basket and pick, and declared his intention of remaining to work: 'for,' said he, 'what time have I for holiday, when, with all my work, work, work, I only get enough out of that stony old vein to keep me in frijolitos, without a taste of pulque, since—quien sabe?—how long ago? Maldita sea la veta, digo yo—curse such a vein, say I!

"Valgame Dios!—this to the black vein, the black vein of Sombrerete!" apostrophized the old gambucino.

"Now your worship knows, of course (but quien sabe? for foreigners are great fools), that every mine has its metal-king, its *mina-padre*, to whom all the ore belongs. He is, your worship knows, not a man, nor a woman, but a spirit—and a very good one, if he is not crossed or annoyed; and when the miners curse or quarrel at their work, he often cuts off the vein, or changes it to heavy lead or iron; but when they work well and hard, and bring him a good stock of cigarros, or leave him in the gallery, when they quit the mine, a little bottle of pulque or mezcal, then he often sends bonanzas, and plenty of rich ore.

"Well, every one said, when they heard Pepito's determination to remain alone in the mine, and after he had so foully abused the celebrated veta negra, 'Valgame! if Pepito doesn't get a visit from padre-mina to-night, it's because he has borrowed holy water or a rosarioncito from father José, the cura of Sombrerete.'

"We were all going to work again at midnight, but the mezcal was so good that none stirred from the pulqueria long after that hour. I, however, shouldered my pick and trudged up the hill to the shaft, first waking up the watchman, who lay snoring at the gate of the hacienda, wrapped in his sarape. I took him with me to the mouth of the shaft, that he might lower me down in the basket; and down I went. When I got to the bottom I called to Pepito, for, knowing he was working there, I had not brought a lantern, but heard nothing save the echo of my own voice, sounding hollow and loud, as it vibrated through the passages and galleries of the mine. Thinking he might be asleep, I groped my way to where we had been working the great lode in the morning, thinking to find him in that direction, and hallooing as I crept, but still no answer; and when I shouted 'Pepito, Pepito, onde esta?'—where are you?—the echo cried jeeringly, 'Onde esta?'

"At length I began to get frightened. Mines, everybody knows, are full of devils, and gnomes, and bad spirits of every kind; and here was I, at midnight, alone, and touching the 'black vein' which had been so abused. I did not like to call again to Pepito, for the echo frightened me, and I felt assured that the answer was made by some unearthly voice, and came direct from the lode of the veta negra, that we were working. I crept back to the bottom of the shaft, and, looking up to the top, where the sky showed no bigger than a tortilla, with one bright star looking straight down, I shouted for the watchman to lower the basket and draw me up; but, holy mother! my voice seemed to knock itself to pieces on the sides of the shaft as it struggled up, and when it reached the top must have been a whisper. I sat down and fairly cried, when a loud shout of laughter rattled along the galleries, and broke as it were up the shaft; I trembled like quicksilver, and heavy drops of perspiration dropped from my forehead to the ground. There was another shout of laughter, and a voice cried out—

"'Come here, Mattias, come here.'

"'Where, most wonderful señor?' I asked, thinking it as well to be respectful.

"'Here, here to the black vein, the old leaden, useless vein,' cried the voice, mockingly; and I thought with horror of the abuse it had that day received.

"Half dead with fear, I crept along the gallery, and, turning an abrupt angle, came upon the lode we had been working.

Ave Maria purissima! what a sight met my eyes! The gallery seemed a mass of fire, yet there was no blaze and no heat. The rock which contained the vein of ore, and the ore itself, were like solid fire; and yet it wasn't fire, for there was no heat, as I said, but a glare so bright that one could see away into the rock, which seemed to extend miles and miles; and every grain of quartz, and even the smallest particle of sand, of which it was composed, was blazing with light, and shone separately like a million diamonds knocked in one; and yet the eye saw miles into the bowels of the earth, and every grain of sand was thus lit up. But if the stone, and the grit, and the sand were thus fiery bright, and the eye scorched to look upon it, what words can describe the glitter of the *vein*, now of sparkling silver, and white, as it were, with flame, but over which a *black blush* now and then shot, and instantaneously disappeared? It wanted not this, however, to tell me that I was looking at the endless *veta negra*, the scorned, abused black vein, which throbbed, miles and miles away into the earth, with virgin silver, enough to supply the world for worlds to come.

"'Ha, ha, ha!' roared the voice; 'the *old leaden, useless vein*. Where's the man that can eat all this silver's worth of frijolitos? Bring him here, bring him here.' And forthwith a thousand little sparkling figures jumped out of the scintillating rock, and, springing to the ground, ringing like new-coined pesos, they seized upon the body of Pepito, which I had not till now observed, who lay, blue with fear, in a corner of the gallery, and, lifting him on their shoulders, brought him in front of the silver vein. The brightness of the metal scorched his eyes, which still could not, even in his fear, resist feasting on the richness of the glittering lode.

"'Bonanza, una bonanza!' shouted the enraptured miner, forgetting his situation, and the presence he was in, for the figure (if figure it can be called, which was like a mist of silver fire) of the padre-mina—the mine-king—was now seen sitting in state on the top of the vein.

"'Bonanza!' shouted the same voice derisively; 'bonanza, from an *old leaden, useless vein!*' repeating the terms which Pepito had used in abusing it. 'Where's the man can eat this silver's worth of frijolitos?'

"'What does he deserve who has thus slighted the silver king?' 'Turn him to lead, lead, lead!' answered the voice. 'Away with him then.'

"The thousand sparkling silverines seized the struggling miner. 'Not lead, not lead,' he shouted; 'anything but lead!' But they held him fast by the legs, and bore him opposite the lode.

"The rock sparkled up into a thousand times more brilliant corruscations than before, and for an instant I thought my eyes would have 'burned' with looking at the silver vein, so heavenly bright it shone. An instant after a void remained in the rock; a horrid black void. The vein had disappeared, but the rock itself was still as bright as ever, all but the black opening which yawned from out the brightness; and opposite this stood the thousand silverines, bearing the body of the luckless gambucino.

"'Uno, dos, *tres*,' shouted the mine-king; and at the word 'tres'—with a hop, skip, and a jump—right into the gaping hollow sprang the thousand silverines, with the luckless miner on their shoulders, whose body, the instant that his heels disappeared into the opening, with these very eyes I saw turned to lead.

"Santa Maria! then all became dark, and I fell senseless to the ground.

"When I recovered a little, I thought to myself, now will come my turn; but, hoping to conciliate the angry mine-king, I sought, in the breast of my shirt, for a bottle of mezcal, which I remembered I had brought with me. There was the bottle, but without a single drop of liquor. This puzzled me; but when I called to mind the fiery spectacle I had just witnessed, I felt no doubt but that the liquor had been dried up in the bottle by the great heat.

"However, I was not molested, and in a short time the miners returned to their work, and, finding me pale and trembling, called me tonto, boracho—drunk and mad. We proceeded to the lode and grubbed away, but all we succeded in picking out were a few lumps of poor lead-ore; and from that day not a dollar's worth of silver was ever drawn from the famous 'black vein of Sombrerete.'"

On the 6th we made a short day's journey to San Pablo, a little town on a confluent of the Conchos, in the midst of a marshy plain. Arrived in the plaza, I had despatched my servant in search of a corral, and was myself taking care of the animals, when a caballero came out of a house in the square, and very politely invited me to take up my quarters with him for the night, and place the mulada in his stables. This offer I gladly accepted, and was presently shown into a large comfortable room, and, moreover, invited to dinner with my entertainer and his friends. The dinner was served on a table—an unusual luxury; but knife, fork, or spoon, there was none. Before commencing, at a signal from his master, the mozo in attendance said a long grace, at the conclusion of which every one crossed himself devoutly and fell to. One large tumbler of water was placed in the centre of the table, but the custom is not to drink until the meal is finished; so that, if a stranger lays hold of the glass during dinner, he is instantly stopped by the host, who tells him "que viene otra cosa," that something else is coming.

The next morning I was in the act of making a very long entry in my note-book, to the effect that at last I had met with hospitality in Mexico, when the mozo presented himself with a bill of yesterday's entertainment: seis reales por la comida—dinner, six rials—and out came the leaf of my memorandum-book, al instante.

In Guajoquilla I had been tempted to purchase a very beautiful "entero," an alazan, or blood chesnut stallion, with long flowing tail and mane, and a perfect specimen of a Mexican caballo de paseo; the most showy and spirited, and at the same time most perfectly good-tempered animal I ever mounted, and so well trained, that I frequently fired at game, resting the rifle on its back, without its moving a muscle. It had travelled, without shoes, and over a flinty road, from Guajoquilla, and had become so sore-footed that I feared I should be compelled to leave it behind me; but hearing that there was an American blacksmith in San Pablo, I paid him a visit for the purpose of getting him to shoe the alazan; but unluckily he had no shoes by him, nor the wherewithal to make a set. Strange to say, that although at this time the horse was so lame that I feared he had foundered altogether, before reaching Chihuahua, and over a very hard road, his feet entirely recovered their soundness, and the next day he travelled without the slightest difficulty.

On the 7th, leaving San Pablo, I met a caravan of waggons from Chihuahua, with a number of officers and families, who were leaving that city from fear of the Americans, who were reported to be on their way to attack it. Amongst the party was the celebrated Andalucian matador Bernardo, who with his troop of bullfighters had been lately attacked by the Indians, and nearly all of them killed—himself escaping after a desperate sword-fight and many severe wounds. We passed the Cañada, a deep ravine, through which runs a small stream, and where are the ruins of an Indian fort. It is dreaded by travellers, as here the Indians attack them from behind rocks, without exposure to themselves. In the Cañada we met a couple of priests, with several pupils, on their way to Durango college: they were all well mounted and armed. Shortly after passing the deserted rancho of Bachimba, we met a General with his escort, "making himself scarce" from Chihuahua; and as they were in the act of encamping, and not wishing to remain in the neighbourhood of the pilfering soldados, I rode on, although it was then sunset, and encamped several miles beyond, where unluckily the stream was dry, and no water procurable.

The next morning, at sunrise, we started for Chihuahua, crossing a plain abounding with antelope, and reached that city about two o'clock. The first appearance of the town from a neighbouring hill is extremely picturesque, its white houses, church-spires, and the surrounding gardens, affording a pleasing contrast to the barren plain which surrounds it. I was most hospitably received by an English family resident in the town, who have the exclusive management of the mint and the numerous mines in the neighbourhood. In this remote and but semi-civilised city, I was surprised to find that they had surrounded themselves with all the comforts, and many of the luxuries, of an English home; and the kindness I here experienced almost spoiled me for the hardships and privations I met with in my subsequent journey.

CHAPTER XIX.

Chihuahua—Trade—Indian Attacks—Massacre of Indians—Horrid Barbarity—Game—Insects—The Zacatero—Shrubs—Mezquit—Want of Trees—Invasion of Americans—The Caravana—Mexican Escort—Sacramento.

CHIHUAHUA, the capital city of the state or department of that name, was built towards the close of the seventeenth century; and therefore cannot boast of such antiquity even as the more remote city of Santa Fé. Its population is between eight and ten thousand permanent inhabitants; although it is the resort of many strangers from New Mexico, California, and Sonora. The cathedral, which is considered by the American traders one of the finest structures in the world, is a large building in no style of architecture, but with rather a handsome façade, embellished with statues of the twelve apostles.

Opposite the principal entrance, over the portals which form one side of the square, were dangling the grim scalps of one hundred and seventy Apaches, who had lately been most treacherously and inhumanly butchered by the Indian hunters in the pay of the state. The scalps of men, women, and children, were brought into the town in procession, and hung as trophies, in this conspicuous situation, of Mexican valour and humanity!

The unfinished convent of San Francisco, commenced by the Jesuits prior to their expulsion from the country, is also a conspicuous mass of masonry and bad taste. It is celebrated as having been the place of confinement of the patriot Hidalgo, the Mexican Hampden, who was executed in a yard behind the building in 1811. A monument to his memory has been erected in the Plaza de Armas, a pyramid of stone, with an inscription eulogistic of that *one* honest Mexican.

The town also boasts a *Casa de Moneda*, or mint, under the management of an English gentleman, where silver, gold, and copper are coined, and an aduana, or customhouse. An aqueduct conveys water to the city from the neighbouring stream, the work of the former Spanish government: it is small, and badly constructed.

The shops are filled with goods of the most paltry description, brought mostly from the United States by way of Santa Fé. The cotton goods called "domestics" in the United States are, however, of good quality, and in great demand. Traders arriving in Chihuahua either sell their goods in bulk to resident merchants, or, opening a store, retail them on their own account; but the latter method occasions great delay and inconvenience, the payments being made in copper and small coins, which it is difficult to exchange for gold, and are not current out of the state.

The trade between the United States and Santa Fé and Chihuahua presents a curious feature in international commerce. The capital embarked in it must exceed a million of dollars, which, however, is subject to great risks, not only on account of the dangers to be apprehended in passing the vast prairies, both from Indian attacks and the loss of animals by the severity of the climate, but from the uncertainty of the laws in force in the remote departments of Mexico with regard to the admission of goods and the duties exacted on them.

It appears that in the "port" of Santa Fé the ordinary *derechos de arancel*, or customs duties, have been laid aside, and a new tariff substituted, by the late Governor Armijo, who, instead of levying the usual ad valorem duties on goods imported from the United States, established the system of exacting duties on "*waggon-loads*," without reference to the nature of the goods contained in them, each waggon paying 500 dollars, whether large or small. The injustice of such an impost was apparent, since the merchant, who carried an assortment of rich and valuable goods into the interior of the country for the fair of San Juan and the markets of the capital and larger cities, paid the same duty as the petty trader on his waggon-load of trumpery for the Santa Fé market.

Moreover, the revenue of the customs must have suffered in an equal ratio, for the traders, to avoid the duties, crowded two or more ordinary waggon-loads into one huge one, and thus saved the duties on two waggons. Notwithstanding this, however, the system still prevails, much to the dissatisfaction of those who, in the former state of things, could, by the skilful application of a bribe, pass any amount of goods at almost nominal expense.

The state of Chihuahua produces gold, silver, copper, iron, saltpetre, &c.; indeed, it is productive in mineral wealth alone, for the soil is thin and poor, and there is everywhere a great scarcity of water. It is, moreover, infested with hostile Indians, who ravage the whole country, and prevent many of its most valuable mines from being worked. These Indians are the Apaches, who inhabit the ridges and plains of the Cordillera, the Sierra Madre on the west, and the tracts between the Conchos and Del Norte on the east, while scattered tribes roam over all parts of the state, committing devastations on the ranchos and haciendas, and depopulating the remote villages.

For the purpose of carrying on a war against the daring savages a species of company was formed by the Chihuahueños, with a capital raised by subscription. This company, under the auspices of the government, offered a bounty of 50 dollars a scalp, as an inducement to people to undertake a war of extermination against the Apaches. One Don Santiago Kirker, an Irishman, long resident in Mexico, and for many years a trapper and Indian trader in the far west, whose exploits in Indian killing would fill a volume, was placed at the head of a band of some hundred and fifty men, including several Shawanee and Delaware Indians, and sent en campaña against the Apaches. The fruits of the campaign were the trophies I saw dangling in front of the cathedral.

In the month of August, the Apaches being then "en paz" with the state, entered, unarmed, the village of Galeana, for the purpose of trading. This band, which consisted of a hundred and seventy, including women and children, was under the command of a celebrated chief, and had no doubt committed many atrocities on the Mexicans; but at this time they had signified their desire for peace to the government of Chihuahua, and were now trading in good faith, and under protection of the faith of treaty. News of their arrival having been sent to Kirker, he immediately forwarded several kegs of spirits, with which they were to be regaled, and detained in the village until he could arrive with his band. On a certain day, about ten in the morning, the

Indians being at the time drinking, dancing, and amusing themselves, and *unarmed*, Kirker sent forward a messenger to say that at such an hour he would be there.

The Mexicans, when they saw him approach with his party, suddenly seized their arms and set upon the unfortunate Indians, who, without even their knives, attempted no resistance, but, throwing themselves on the ground when they saw Kirker's men surrounding them, submitted to their fate. The infuriated Mexicans spared neither age nor sex; with fiendish shouts they massacred their unresisting victims, glutting their long pent-up revenge of many years of persecution. One woman, big with child, rushed into the church, clasping the altar and crying for mercy for herself and unborn babe. She was followed, and fell pierced with a dozen lances; and then (it is almost impossible to conceive such an atrocity, but I had it from an eye-witness on the spot not two months after the tragedy) the child was torn alive from the yet palpitating body of its mother, first plunged into the holy water to be baptized, and immediately its brains were dashed out against a wall.

A hundred and sixty men, women, and children were slaughtered, and, with the scalps carried on poles, Kirker's party entered Chihuahua—in procession, headed by the Governor and priests, with bands of music escorting them in triumph to the town.

Nor is this a solitary instance of similar barbarity, for on two previous occasions parties of American traders and trappers perpetrated most treacherous atrocities on tribes of the same nation on the river Gila. The Indians on their part equal their more civilized enemies in barbarity; and such is the war of extermination carried on between the Mexicans and Apaches.

But to return to Chihuahua. The state, which comprises an area of 107,584 square miles, contains only 180,000 inhabitants (and this is probably an exaggerated estimate), or not two inhabitants to the square mile. Of this vast territory not twenty square miles are under cultivation, and at least three-fifths is utterly sterile and unproductive. The city of Chihuahua is distant from Mexico, in a direct line, 1250 miles, and from the nearest seaport, Guaymas, in the Gulf of California, over an almost impracticable country, 600 miles. Thus its isolated position, and comparative worthlessness to Mexico, are apparent.

Chihuahua is a paradise for sportsmen. In the sierras and mountains are found two species of bears—the common black or American bear, and the grizly bear of the Rocky Mountains. The last are the most numerous, and are abundant in the sierras in the neighbourhood of Chihuahua. The carnero cimarron—the big-horn or Rocky Mountain sheep—is also common on the Cordillera. Elk, black-tailed deer, cola-prieta (a large species of the fallow deer), the common red deer of America, and antelope, abound on all the plains and sierras. Of smaller game, peccaries (javali), also called cojamete, hares, and rabbits are everywhere numerous; and beavers are still found in the Gila, the Pecos, the Del Norte, and their tributary streams. Of birds—the faisan, commonly called paisano, a species of pheasant: the quail, or rather a bird between a quail and a partridge, is abundant; while every variety of snipe and plover is found on the plains, not forgetting the *gruya*, of the crane kind, whose meat is excellent. There are also two varieties of wolf—the white, or mountain wolf; and the coyote, or small wolf of the plains, whose long-continued and melancholy howl is an invariable adjunct to a Mexican night encampment.

But, perhaps, in all departments of natural history the entomologist would find the plains of Chihuahua most prolific in specimens. I have counted seventy-five varieties of grasshoppers and locusts, some of enormous size and most brilliant and fantastic colours. There is also an insect peculiar to this part of Mexico—at least I have not met with it excepting on the plains of Durango and Chihuahua, neither have I met with more than one traveller who has observed it, although it is most curious and worthy of attention.

This insect is from four to six inches in length, and has four long and slender legs. The body appears to the naked eye to be nothing more than a blade of grass, without the slightest muscular action or appearance of vitality, excepting in the antennæ, which are two in number, and about half an inch in length. They move very slowly on their long legs, and resemble a blade of grass being carried by ants. I saw them several times before examining them minutely, thinking that they were in fact bits of grass. I heard of no other name for them than the local one of *zacateros*, from zacate (grass); and the Mexicans assert that, if horses or mules swallow these insects, they invariably die.[*]

Of bugs and beetles there is endless variety—including the cocuyo or lantern-bug, and the tarantula.

Of reptiles those most frequently met with are the rattlesnake and copper-head, both of which are poisonous. The scorpion is common all over the republic, and its sting is sometimes fatal to children or persons of inflammable temperament. The cameleon abounds in the plains, a grotesque, but harmless and inoffensive animal. It always assimilates its colour to that of the soil where it is found. The cameleon is the "horned frog" of the prairies of America.

The characteristic shrub on the plains of Chihuahua is the mezquit—a species of acacia, which grows to the height of ten or twelve feet. The seeds, contained in a small pod, resemble those of the laburnum, and are used by the Apaches to make a kind of bread or cake, which is sweet and pleasant to the taste. The wood is exceedingly hard and heavy.[†] This constantly recurring and ugly shrub becomes quite an eyesore to the traveller passing the mezquit-covered plains, as it is the only thing in the shape of a tree seen for hundreds of miles, excepting here and there a solitary alamo or willow, which overhangs a spring, and which invariably gives a name to the rancho or hacienda which may generally be found in the vicinity of water. Thus day after day I passed the ranchos of El Sauz, Los Sauzes, Los Sauzillos—the willow, the willows, the little willows—or El Alamo, Los Alamitos—the poplar, the little poplars. The last is the only timber found on the streams in Northern Mexico, and on the Del Norte and the Arkansa it grows to a great size.

Chihuahua at this time was in a state of considerable ferment, on account of the anticipated advance of the Americans upon the city from New Mexico. That department had been occupied by them without opposition, Governor Armijo and his three thousand heroes scattering before the barbarians of the north, as they please to call the Americans, without firing a shot. A body of troops had now advanced to the borders of the department, and were known to be encamped on the Rio del Norte, at the entrance of the "Jornada del Muerto"—the deadman's journey —a tract of desert, without wood or water, which extends nearly one hundred miles across a bend of the river; and a journey across which is dreaded by the Mexicans, not only on account of these natural difficulties, but from the fact of its being the haunt of numerous bands of Apaches, who swoop down from the sierras upon travellers, who, with their exhausted animals, have but little chance of escape.

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[*] Since writing the above, I find that this insect is noticed in Clavigero, who calls it, on the authority of Hernandez, quauhmecatl, a Mexican name; therefore it is probable that it is also found in Southern Mexico.

[†] From the mezquit exudes gum Arabic.

In rear of the American troops was the long-expected *caravana* of upwards of two hundred waggons, destined for Chihuahua and the fair of San Juan. These, entering Santa Fé with the troops, had of course paid no duty in that port of entry, and it was a great object with the Governor of Chihuahua that they should proceed to that city and pay the usual duties to him, which otherwise would have been payable to the customhouse of Santa Fé. The government being entirely without funds, and anxious to raise and equip a body of troops to oppose the advance of the Americans, the arrival of the caravan would have been most opportune, since, at the usual rate of duties, viz. 500 dollars for each waggon, the amount to be received by the government would exceed 100,000 dollars.

However, the merchants, particularly the Americans, were reluctant to trust their property to the chances of Mexican honour, not knowing how they might be treated under the present circumstances of war: and having neglected to profit by the permission of General Kearney, who then commanded the United States troops, to proceed to their destination; now, that that officer had advanced to California, and the command had devolved on another, they were ordered to remain in rear of the troops, and not to advance excepting under their escort. The commanding officer deemed it imprudent to allow such an amount of the sinews of war to be placed in the hands of the enemy, to be used against the Americans. That this was very proper under the circumstances there could be no gainsaying, but at the same time there was a very large amount of property belonging to English merchants and others of neutral nations, who were suffering enormous losses by the detention of their goods; and as no official notification had been given of the *blockade* of the frontier town of Santa Fé, this prohibition to proceed was considered unjust and arbitrary. My opinion, however, is, that the officer in command of the United States troops was perfectly justified in the course he pursued, knowing well the uses to which the money thus obtained would have been applied.

In order to keep the enemy in ignorance of the state of affairs in Chihuahua, no one had been permitted to leave the state for some months; and when it was known that I had received a carte blanche from Don Angel Trias, the Governor, to proceed where I pleased, I was from this circumstance invested with all kinds of official dignities by the population. As it was known that I was the bearer of sundry despatches from the Governor to the Americans, I was immediately voted to be commissionado on the part of the Mexican government to treat for peace, or I was un coronel Yngles, bound to Oregon to settle the difference respecting that disputed territory. The mysterious fact of an Englishman travelling through the country at such a time, and being permitted to proceed "al norte," which permission their most influential citizens had been unable to obtain, was sufficient to put the curious on the qui-vive; and when on the morning of my departure an escort of soldiers was seen drawn up at my door, I was immediately promoted to be "somebody." This escort—save the mark!—consisted of two or three dragoons of the regiment of Vera Cruz, which had been several years in Santa Fé, but had run away with the Governor on the approach of the Americans, and were now stationed at Chihuahua. Their horses—wretched, half-starved animals—were borrowed for the occasion; and the men, refusing to march without some provision for the road, were advanced their "sueldo" by a patriotic merchant of the town, who gave each a handful of copper coins, which they carefully tied up in the corners of their sarapes. Their dress was original and uniform (in rags). One had on a dirty broad-brimmed straw hat, another a handkerchief tied round his head. One had a portion of a jacket, another was in his shirt-sleeves, with overalls, open to the winds, reaching a little below the knees. All were bootless and unspurred. One had a rusty sword and lance, another a gun without a hammer, the third a bow and arrows. Although the nights were piercingly cold, they had but one wretched, tattered sarape of the commonest kind between them, and no rations of any description.

These were regulars of the regiment of Vera Cruz. I may as well here mention that, two or three months after, Colonel Doniphan, with 900 volunteers, marched through the state of Chihuahua, defeating on one occasion 3000 Mexicans with great slaughter, and taking the city itself, without losing *one man* in the campaign.

At Sacramento the Mexicans entrenched themselves behind formidable breastworks, having ten or twelve pieces of artillery in battery, and numbering at least 3000. Will it be believed that these miserable creatures were driven from their position, and slaughtered like sheep, by 900 raw backwoodsmen, who did not lose *one single man* in the encounter?

CHAPTER XX.

Leave Chihuahua—Coursing a Coyote—El Sauz—Lone Tree—Los Sauzillos—Death of the Alazan—Encinillas—El Carmen—Carrizal—Preparing a Feast—Many a Slip, &c.—Fountain of the Star—New Mexicans—Sand Mountain—Arrive at El Paso.

On the 10th of November I left Chihuahua, bound for the capital of New Mexico. Passing the Rancho del Sacramento, where a few months after the Missourians slaughtered a host of Mexicans, we entered a large plain well covered with grass, on which were immense flocks of sheep. A coyote lazily crossed the road, and, stopping within a few yards, sat down upon its haunches, and coolly regarded us as we passed. Panchito had had a four days' rest, and was in fine condition and spirits, and I determined to try the mettle of the wolf; the level plain, with its springy turf, offering a fine field for a course. Cantering gently at first, the coyote allowed me to approach within a hundred yards before he loped lazily away; but finding I was on his traces, he looked round, and, gathering himself up, bowled away at full speed. Then I gave Panchito the spur, and, answering it with a bound, we were soon at the stern of the wolf. Then, for the first time, the animal saw we were in earnest, and, with a sweep of his bushy tail, pushed for his life across the plain. At the distance of two or three miles a rocky ridge was in sight, where he evidently thought to secure a retreat, but Panchito bounded along like the wind itself, and soon proved to the wolf that his race was run. After trying in vain to double, he made one desperate rush, upon which, lifting Panchito with rein and leg, we came up and passed the panting beast, when, seeing that escape was impossible, he lay down, and, with sullen and cowardly resignation, curled up for the expected blow, as pistol in hand I reined up Panchito at his side. However, I was merciful, and allowed the animal to escape.

At ten at night I arrived at the hacienda of El Sauz, belonging to the Governor of Chihuahua, Don Angel Trias. It was enclosed with a high wall, as a protection from the Indians, who, a short time before, had destroyed the cattle of the hacienda, filling a well in the middle of the corral with the carcases of slaughtered sheep and oxen. It was still bricked up.

The next day we proceeded to another hacienda, likewise called after the willows, Los Sauzillos. Passing a large plain, in the midst of which stood a lone poplar, wolves were continually crossing the road, both the coyote and the large grey variety. I was this day mounted upon the alazan which I had purchased at Guajoquilla. We were within sight of our halting-place for the night, when the horse, which had carried me all day without my having had recourse to whip or spur, suddenly began to flag, and I noticed that a profuse perspiration had broken out on its ears and neck. I instantly dismounted, and perceived a quivering in the flank and a swelling of the belly. Before I could remove the saddle the poor beast fell down, and, although I opened a vein and made every attempt to relieve it, it once more rose to its legs, and, spinning round in the greatest apparent agony, fell dead to the ground.

The cause of its death was, that my servant, contrary to my orders, had given the animals young corn the night before, which food is often fatal to horses not accustomed to feed on grain.

This rancho is situated on the margin of a lake of brackish water, and we found the people actual prisoners within its walls, the gates being closed, and a man stationed on the azotea with a large wall-piece, looking out for Indians. At night a large fire was kindled on the roof, the blaze of which illuminated the country far and near. Not a soul would venture after sunset outside the gate, which the majordomo, a Gachupin, refused to open to allow my servant to procure some wood for a fire to cook my supper, and we had to content ourselves with one of corn-cobs, which lay scattered about the corral.

On the 12th, passing Encinillas, a large hacienda belonging to Don Angel Trias, we encamped on the banks of an arroyo, running through the middle of a plain, walled by sierras, where the Apaches have several villages. This being very dangerous ground, we put out the fire at sunset, and took all precautions against surprise. The animals fared badly, the grass being thin and burned up by the sun, and what little there was being of bad quality.

The next day we reached the small village of El Carmen, and, camping by a little thread of a rivulet outside of the town, were surrounded by all the loafers of the village. The night was very cold, and our fire, the fuel for which we purchased, was completely surrounded by these idle vagabonds. At last, my temper being frozen out of me, I went up to the fire, and said, "Señores, allow me to present you with three rials, which will enable you to purchase wood for two fires; this fire I will be obliged to you if you will allow myself and fellow-travellers to warm ourselves by, as we are very cold; and also, with your kind permission, wish to cook our suppers by it." This was enough for them: a Mexican, like a Spaniard, is very sensitive, and the hint went through them. They immediately dispersed, and I saw no more of them the remainder of the evening.

Near El Carmen is a pretty little stream, fringed with alamos, which runs through a wild and broken country of sierras. The plains, generally about ten to twenty miles in length, are divided from each other by an elevated ridge, but there is no perceptible difference in the elevation of them from Chihuahua to El Paso. The road is level excepting in crossing these ridges, and hard everywhere except on the marshy plain of Encinillas, which is often inundated. This lake has no outlet, and is fed by numerous small streams from the sierras; its length is ten miles, by three in breadth. The marshy ground around the lake is covered with an alkaline efflorescence called tezquite, a substance of considerable value. The water, impregnated with salts, is brackish and unpleasant to the taste, but in the rainy season loses its disagreeable properties.

On the 14th we travelled sixty miles, and camped on a bare plain without wood or water, the night being so dark that we were unable to reach Carrizal, although it was but a few miles distant from our encampment. The next morning we reached the village, where I stopped the whole day, during an extraordinary hurricane of wind, which rendered travelling impossible. We had been on short commons for two days, as the hungry escort had devoured my provisions, but here I resolved to have a feast, and, setting all hands to forage, on return we found our combined efforts had produced an imposing pile of several yards of beef (for here the meat is cut into long strips and dried), onions, chiles, frijoles, sweet corn, eggs, &c. An enormous olla was procured, and everything was bundled pell-mell into it, seasoned with pepper and salt and chile.

To protect the fire from the hurricane that was blowing, all the packs and saddles were piled round it, and my servant and the soldiers relieved each other in their vigilant watch of the precious compound, myself superintending the process of cooking. Our appetites, ravenous with a fast of twenty-four hours, were in first-rate order, but we determined that the pot should be left on the fire until the savoury mess was perfectly cooked. It was within an hour or two of sunset, and we had not yet broken our fast. The olla simmered, and a savoury steam pervaded the air. The dragoons licked their lips, and their eyes watered—never had they had such a feast in perspective; for myself, I never removed my eyes from the pot, and had just resolved that, when the puro in my mouth was smoked out, the puchero would have attained perfection. At length the moment arrived: my mozo, with a blazing smile, approached the fire, and with guarded hands seized the top of the olla, and lifted it from the ashes.

"Ave Maria Purissima! Santissima Virgen!" broke from the lips of the dragoons; "Mil carajos!" burst from the *heart* of the mozo; and I sank almost senseless to the ground. On lifting the pot the bottom fell out, and splash went everything into the blazing fire. Valgame Dios! what a moment was that! Stupified, and hardly crediting our senses, we gazed at the burning, frizzling, hissing remnants, [illegible]hey were consuming before our eyes. Nothing was rescued, [illegible] our elaborate feast was simplified into a supper of frijoles a[illegible] chile colorado, which, after some difficulty, we procured from the village.

The next morning we started before daylight, and at sunrise watered our animals at the little lake called Laguna de Patos, from the ducks which frequent it; and at midday we halted at another spring, the Ojo de la Estrella—star spring—where we again watered them, as we should be obliged to camp that night without water. We chose a camping-ground in a large plain covered with mezquit, which afforded us a little fuel—now become very necessary, as the nights were piercingly cold. As we had been unable to procure provisions in Carrizal, we went to bed supperless, which was now a very usual occurrence. My animals suffered from the cold, which, coming as they did from the tierra caliente, they felt excessively, particularly a little blood horse with an exceedingly fine coat. I was obliged to share my blankets with this poor animal, or I believe it would have died in the night.

Just at daybreak the next morning I was riding in advance of the party, when I met a cavalcade of horsemen whose wild costume, painted faces, and arms consisting of bows and arrows, made me think at first that they were Indians. On their part, they evidently did not know what to make of me, and halted while two of them rode forward to reconnoitre. I quickly slipped the cover off my rifle, and advanced. Seeing my escort following, they saw we were amigos; but the nearer they approached me, the more certain was I that they were Apaches, for they were all in Indian dress, and frightfully painted. I was as nearly as possible shooting the foremost, when he exclaimed in Spanish, "Adios, amigo! que novedades hay?" and I then saw a number of mules, packed with bales and barrels, behind him. They were Paseños, on their way to Chihuahua, with aguardiente, raisins, and fruit; and shortly after passing them, I found in the road a large bag of pazas or raisins, which I pounced upon as a great prize, and, waiting until the escort came up, we dismounted, and, sitting at the roadside, devoured the fruit with great gusto, as this was our second day of banyan. This bag lasted for many days. I found the raisins a great improvement to stews, &c., and we popped a handful or two into every dish.

At ten o'clock we reached a muddy hole of water, entirely frozen—my animals refusing to drink, being afraid of the ice after we had broken it. The water was as thick as pea-soup; nevertheless we filled our huages with it, as we should probably meet with none so good that day. Towards sunset we passed a most extraordinary mountain of loose shifting sand, three miles in breadth, and, according to the Paseños, sixty in length. The huge rolling mass of sand is nearly destitute of vegetation, save here and there a bunch of greasewood half-buried in the sand. Road there is none, but a track across is marked by the skeletons and dead bodies of oxen, and of mules and horses, which everywhere meet the eye. On one ridge the upper half of a human skeleton protruded from the sand, and bones of animals and carcases in every stage of decay. The sand is knee-deep, and constantly shifting, and pack-animals have great difficulty in passing. After sunset we reached a dirty, stagnant pool, known as the "Ojo de Malayuca;" but, as there was not a blade of grass in the vicinity, we were compelled to turn out of the road and search over the arid plain for a patch to camp in. At last we succeeded in finding a spot, and encamped, without wood, water, or supper, being the second day's fast. The next day, passing a broken country, perfectly barren, we struck into the valley of El Paso, and for the first time I saw the well-timbered bottom of the Rio Bravo del Norte. Descending a ridge covered with greasewood and mezquit, we entered the little village of El Paso, with its vineyards and orchards and well-cultivated gardens lying along the right bank of the river.

On entering the plaza I was immediately surrounded by a crowd, for my escort had ridden before me and mystified them with wonderful accounts of my importance. However, as I did not choose to enlighten them as to my destination or the object of my journey, they were fain to rest satisfied with the egregious lies of the dragones. In the plaza was a little guard-house, where a ferocious captain was in command of a dirty dozen or two of soldados. This worthy, to show his importance, sent a serjeant to order my instant attendance at the guard-room. In as many words I told the astonished messenger to tell his officer "to go to the devil;" to his horror, and the delight of the surrounding crowd. The answer was delivered word for word, but I heard no more from the military hero. My next visitor was the "prefecto," who is an important personage in a small place. That worthy, with a dignified air, asked in a determined tone, as much as to say to the crowd "See how soon I will learn his business"—

"Por onde pasa usted, caballero?"—Where are you bound?

"Por Santa Fé y Nuevo Mejico," I answered.

"No, señor," he immediately rejoined, "this cannot be permitted: by the order of the Governor no one is allowed to go to the north; and I must request, moreover, that you exhibit your passport and other documentos."

"Hi lo tiene usted"—here you have it—I answered, producing a credential which at once caused the hat to fly from his head, and an offer of himself, su casa, y todo lo que tiene, a mi disposicion—his house, and all in it, at my disposal. However, all his munificent offers were declined, as I had letters to the cura, a young priest named Ortiz, whose unbounded hospitality I enjoyed during my stay.

CHAPTER XXI.

First Settlement of El Paso—Fertility of Valley—American Prisoners—Treachery of a Guide—Leave El Paso—Ragged Escort—Camp on Rio Grande—Valley of the Rio Grande—Indian Sign—Dead Man's Journey—Animals suffer from Thirst—System of Plains—Traders' Camp—Hunting—Scarcity of Provisions—Missourians' Camp—Americans as Soldiers—Officers—Game—Indian Depredations—A Painter—Turkey-hunting—On my own Hook—Mules and Mule-packing.

El Paso del Norte, so called from the ford of that river, which is here first struck and crossed on the way to New Mexico, is the oldest settlement in Northern Mexico, a mission having been established there by el padre Fray Augustin Ruiz, one of the Franciscan monks who first visited New Mexico, as early as the close of the sixteenth century (about the year 1585). Fray Ruiz, in company with two others, named Venabides and Marcos, discovering in the natives a laudable disposition to receive the word of God and embrace "la santa fé Catolica," remained here a considerable time, preaching by signs to the Indians, and making many miraculous conversions. Eventually, Venabides having returned to Spain and given a glowing account of the riches of the country, and the *muy buen indole*—the very proper disposition of the aborigines—Don Juan Oñate was despatched to conquer, take possession of, and govern the remote colony, and on his way to Santa Fé established a permanent settlement at El Paso. Twelve families from Old Castile accompanied Oñate to Nuevo Mejico to form a colony, and their descendants still remain scattered over the province.

Several years after, when the Spanish colonists were driven out of New Mexico, they retreated to El Paso, where they erected a fortification, and maintained themselves until the arrival of reinforcements from Mexico. The present settlement is scattered for about fifteen miles along the right bank of the Del Norte, and contains five or six thousand inhabitants. The plaza, or village, of El Paso, is situated at the head of the valley, and at the other extremity is the presidio of San Eleazario. Between the two is a continued line of adobe houses, with their plots of garden and vineyard.

The farms seldom contain more than twenty acres, each family having a separate house and plot of land.

The Del Norte is dammed about a mile above the ford, and water is conveyed by an *acequia madre*—main canal—to irrigate the valley. From this acequia, other smaller ones branch out in every direction, until the land is intersected in every part with dikes, and is thus rendered fertile and productive.

The soil produces wheat, maize, and other grains, and is admirably adapted to the growth of the vine, which is cultivated here, and yields abundantly; and a wine of excellent flavour is made from the grapes. Brandy of a tolerable quality is also manufactured, and, under the name of aguardiente del Paso, is highly esteemed in Durango and Chihuahua. Under proper management wine-making here might become a very profitable branch of trade, as the interior of Mexico is now supplied with French wines, the cost of which, owing to the long land-carriage from the seaports, is enormous, and wine might be made from the Paso grape equal to the best growths of France or Spain. Fruits of all kinds, common to temperate regions, and vegetables, are abundant and of good quality.

The river bottom is timbered with cotton-woods, which extend a few hundred yards on each side the banks. The river itself is here a small turbid stream, with water of a muddy red, but in the season of the rains it is swollen to six times its present breadth, and frequently overflows the banks. It is of fordable depth in almost any part; but, from the constantly shifting quicksands and bars, is always difficult, and often dangerous, to cross with loaded waggons. It abounds with fish and eels of large size. The houses of the Paseños are built of the adobe, and are small, but clean and neatly kept. Here, as everywhere else in Northern Mexico, the people are in constant fear of Indian attacks, and, from the frequent devastations of the Apaches, the valley has been almost swept of horses, mules, and cattle. The New Mexicans too, disguised as Indians, often plunder these settlements (as occurred during my visit, when two were captured), and frequently accompany the Apaches in their raids on the state of Chihuahua.—"Cosas de Mejico."

At this time the Paseños had enrolled themselves into a body of troops termed "*auxiliares*," 700 strong; but in spite of them the Apaches attacked a mulada at the outskirts of the town, and, but for the bravery of two negroes, runaway slaves from the Cherokee nation, would have succeeded in carrying off the whole herd; this was during my stay in this part of the country. One of the herders was killed, but the negroes, when the animals were already in the hands of the Indians, seized their rifles and came to the rescue, succeeding in recapturing the mulada.

At El Paso I found four Americans, prisoners at large. They had arrived here on their way to California, with a mountain trapper as their guide, who, from some disagreement respecting the amount of pay he was to receive, thought proper to revenge himself by denouncing them as spies, and they were consequently thrown into prison. It being subsequently discovered that the informer had committed the most barefaced perjury, these men were released, and the denouncer confined in their stead—quite an un-Mexican act of justice. However, as they had arrived unprovided with passports, they were detained as prisoners, although permitted to go at large about the place, living, or rather existing, on charity. Their baggage had been taken from them, their animals sold, and they were left to shift for themselves. I endeavoured to procure their liberty, by offering to take them with me, and guarantee their good conduct while in the country, and also that they would not take up arms against the Mexicans; but this having no effect, and as the poor fellows were in a wretched condition, I advised them to run for it, promising to pick them up on the road and supply them with the necessary provision, and cautioning them at the same time to conceal themselves in the daytime, travelling at night, and on no account to enter the settlements. They disappeared from El Paso the same night, and what became of them will be presently shown.

On the 19th I left the Paso with an escort of fifteen *auxiliares*, a ragged troop, with whom to have marched through Coventry would have broken the heart of Sir John Falstaff.

Armed with bows and arrows, lances, and old rusty escopetas, and mounted on miserable horses, their appearance was anything but warlike, and far from formidable. I did my best to escape the honour, knowing that they would only be in my way, and of not the slightest use in case of Indian attack; but all my protestations were attributed to modesty, and were overruled, and I was fain to put myself at the head of the band of valiant Paseños, who were to escort me to the borders of the state of Chihuahua. One of them, a very old man, with a long lance which he carried across his saddle-bow, and an old rusty bell-mouthed escopeta, attached himself particularly to me, riding by my side, and pointing out the points—the mal puntos—whence the Apaches usually made their attacks. He had, he told me, served all through the War of Independence, "y por el Rey"—for the king—he added, reverently doffing his hat at the mention of the king. He was a loyalist heart and soul. "Ojala por los dias felices del reyno!"—alas for the happy time when Mexico was ruled by a king!—was his constant sighing exclamation. A doblon, with the head of Carlos Tercero, hung round his neck, and was ever in his hand, being reverently kissed every few miles. He was, he said, *medio tonto*—half-crazy—and made verses, very sorry ones, but he would repeat them to me when we arrived in camp.

Leaving El Paso, we travelled along the rugged precipitous bank of the river, crossing it about three miles above the village, and, striking into a wild barren-looking country, again made the river about sunset, and encamped in the bottom, under some very large cotton-woods, at a point called Los Alamitos—the little poplars—although they are enormous trees. We had here a very picturesque camp. Several fires gleamed under the trees, and round them lay the savage-looking Paseños, whilst the animals were picketed round about. Several deer jumped out of the bottom when we entered, and on the banks of the river I saw some fresh beaver "sign."

The next day, halting an hour at the Brazitos, an encamping-ground so called, and a short time afterwards passing the battle-ground where Doniphan's Missourians routed the Mexicans, we saw Indian sign on the banks of the river, where a considerable body had just crossed. A little farther on we met a party of seven soldiers returning from a successful hunt after the Americans who had escaped from the Paso. These unfortunates were sitting quietly behind their captors, who had overtaken them at the little settlement of Doñana, which they foolishly entered to obtain provisions.

Doñana is a very recent settlement of ten or fifteen families, who, tempted by the richness of the soil, abandoned their farms in the valley of El Paso, and have here attempted to cultivate a small tract in the very midst of the Apaches, who have already paid them several visits and carried off or destroyed their stock of cattle. The huts are built of logs and mud, and situated on the top of a tabular bluff which looks down upon the river-bottom.

The soil along this bottom, from El Paso to the settlements of New Mexico, is amazingly rich, and admirably adapted for the growth of all kinds of grain. The timber upon it is cottonwood, dwarf oak, and mezquit, under which is a thick undergrowth of bushes. Several attempts have been made to settle this productive tract, but have all of them failed from the hostility of the Apaches. Should this department fall into the hands of the Americans, it will soon become a thriving settlement; for the hardy backwoodsman, with his axe on one shoulder and rifle on the other, will not be deterred by the savage, like the present pusillanimous owners of the soil, from turning it to account.

The next day we encamped at San Diego, the point where the traveller leaves the river and enters upon the dreaded Jornada del Muerto—the journey of the dead man. All the camping and watering places on the river are named, but there are no settlements, with the exception of Doñana, between El Paso and Socorro, the first settlement in New Mexico, a distance of 250 miles.

At San Diego we saw more Indian signs, the consequence of which was, that my escort reported their horses to be exhausted and unable to proceed; so, nothing loth, I gave them their congée, and the next morning they retraced their steps to El Paso, leaving me with my two servants to pass the jornada. I was now at the edge of this formidable desert, where along the road the bleaching bones of mules and horses testify to the dangers to be apprehended from the want of water and pasture, and many human bones likewise tell their tale of Indian slaughter and assault.

I remained in camp until noon, when for the last time we led the animals to the water and allowed them to drink their fill: we then mounted, and at a sharp pace struck at once into the jornada. The road is perfectly level and hard, and over plains bounded by sierras. Palmillas and bushes of sage (artemisia) are scattered here and there, but the mezquit is now becoming scarce, the tornilla or screw-wood taking its place: farther on this wood ceases, and there is then no fuel to be met with of any description. Large herds of antelope bounded past, and coyotes skulked along on their trail, and prairie-dog towns were met every few miles, but their inmates were snug in their winter-quarters, and only made their appearance to bask in the meridian sun. Shortly after leaving San Diego we found water in a little hole called El Perillo (the little dog), but our animals, having so lately drunk, would not profit by the discovery, and we hurried on, keeping the pack-animals in a sharp trot. Near the Perillo is a point of rocks which abuts upon the road, and from which a large body of Apaches a few years since pounced upon a band of American trappers and entirely defeated them, killing several and carrying off all their animals. Behind these rocks they frequently lie in ambush, shooting down the unwary traveller, whose first intimation of their presence is the puff of smoke from the rocks, or the whiz of an arrow through the air. One of my mozos, who was a New Mexican and knew the country well, warned me of the dangers of this spot, and before passing it I halted the mules and rode on to reconnoitre; but no Apache lurked behind it, and we passed unmolested.

About midnight we stopped at the Laguna del Muerto—the dead man's lake—a depression in the plain, which in the rainy season is covered with water, but was now hard and dry. We rested the animals here for half an hour, and, collecting a few armfuls of artemisia, attempted to make a fire, for we were all benumbed with cold; but the dry twigs blazed brightly for a minute, and were instantly consumed. By the temporary light it afforded us we discovered that a large party of Indians had passed the very spot but a few hours, and were probably not far off at that moment, and, if so, they would certainly be attracted by our fire, so we desisted in our attempts. The mules and horses, which had travelled at a very quick pace, were suffering, even thus early, from want of water, and my horse bit off the neck of a huage, or gourd, which I had placed on the ground, and which the poor beast by his nose knew to contain water. However, as there was not a vestige of grass on the spot, after a halt of half an hour, we again mounted and proceeded on our journey, continuing at a rapid pace all night. At sunrise we halted for a couple of hours on a patch of grass which afforded a bite to the tired animals, and about three in the afternoon had the satisfaction of reaching the river at the watering-place called Fray Cristoval, having performed the whole distance of the jornada, of ninety-five, or, as some say, one hundred miles, in little more than twenty hours.

The plain through which the dead man's journey passes is one of a system, or series, which stretch along the table-land between the Sierra Madre, or main chain of the Cordillera, on the west, and the small mountain-chain of the Sierra Blanca and the Organos, which form the dividing ridge between the waters of the Del Norte and the Rio Pecos. Through this valley, fed by but few streams, runs the Del Norte. Its water, from the constant abrasion of the banks of alluvial soil, is very muddy and discoloured, but nevertheless of excellent quality, and has the reputation at El Paso of possessing chemical properties which prevent diseases of the kidneys, stone, &c. &c.

The White Mountain and the Organos are singularly destitute of streams, but on the latter is said to be a small lake, in the waters of which may be seen the phenomenon of a daily rise and fall similar to a tide. They are also reported to abound in minerals, but, from the fact of these sierras being the hiding-places of Apaches, they are never visited excepting during a hostile expedition against these Indians, and consequently in these excursions but little opportunity is afforded for an examination of the country. The sierras are also celebrated for medicinal herbs of great value, which the Apaches, when at peace with the Paseños, sometimes bring in for sale.

Indeed, from the accounts which I received from the people of these mountains, I should judge them to be well worthy of a visit, which however would be extremely hazardous on account of the hostility of the Indians and the scarcity of water. Their formation is apparently volcanic, and, judging from the nature of the plains, which in many places are strewed with volcanic substances, and exhibit the bluffs of tabular form, composed of basaltic lava, known by the name of mesas (tables), the valley must at one time have been subjected to volcanic agency.

Staying at Fray Cristoval but one night, I pushed on to the ruins of Valverde, a long-deserted rancheria, a few miles beyond which was the advanced post of the American troops. Here, encamped on the banks of the river in the heavy timber, I found a great portion of the caravan which I have before mentioned as being en route to Chihuahua, and also a surveying party under the command of Lieut. Abert, of the United States Topographical Engineers. Being entirely out of provisions, and my camp hungry, the next morning I mounted my hunting-mule, and crossed the river, which was partially frozen, to look for deer in the bottom. Thanks to my mule, as I was passing through a thicket I saw her prick her ears and look on one side, and, following her gaze, descried three deer standing under a tree with their heads turned towards me. My rifle was quickly up to my shoulder, and a fine large doe dropped to the report, shot through the heart. Being in a hurry, I did not wait to cut it up, but threw it on to my mule, which I drove before me to the river. Large blocks of ice were floating down, which rendered the passage difficult, but I mounted behind the deer and pushed the mule into the stream. Just as we had got into the middle of the current a large piece of ice struck her, and, to prevent herself being carried down the stream, she threw herself on her haunches, and I slipped over the tail, and head over ears into the water. Rid of the extra load, the mule carried the deer safely over and trotted off to camp, where she quietly stood to be unpacked, leaving me, drenched to the skin, to follow after her.

The traders had been lying here many weeks, and the bottom where they were encamped presented quite a picturesque appearance. The timber extends half a mile from the river, and the cotton-wood trees are of large size, without any undergrowth of bushes. Amongst the trees, in open spaces, were drawn up the waggons, formed into a corral or square, and close together, so that the whole made a most formidable fort, and, when filled with some hundred rifles, could defy the attacks of Indians or Mexicans. Scattered about were tents and shanties of logs and branches of every conceivable form, round which lounged wild-looking Missourians, some cooking at the camp-fires, some cleaning their rifles or firing at targets—blazes cut in the trees, with a bull's-eye made with wet powder on the white bark. From morning till night the camp resounded with the popping of rifles, firing at marks for prizes of tobacco, or at any living creature which presented itself. The oxen, horses, and mules were sent out at daylight to pasture on the grass of the prairie, and at sunset made their appearance, driven in by the Mexican herders, and were secured for the night in the corrals. My own animals roamed at will, but every evening came to the river to drink, and made their way to my camp, where they would frequently stay round the fire all night. They never required herding, for they made their appearance as regularly as the day closed, and would come to my whistle whenever I required my hunting-mule. The poor beasts were getting very poor, not having had corn since leaving El Paso, and having subsisted during the journey from that place on very little of the coarsest kind of grass. They felt it the more as they were all accustomed to be fed on grain; and the severe cold was very trying to them, coming, as they did, from a tropical climate. My favourite horse, Panchito, had lost all his good looks; his once full and arched neck was now a perfect "ewe," and his ribs and hip-bones were almost protruding through the skin; but he was as game as ever, and had never once flinched in his work.

Provisions of all kinds were very scarce in the camp, and the game, being constantly hunted, soon disappeared. Having been invited to join the hospitable mess of the officers of the Engineers, I fortunately did not suffer, although even they were living on their rations, and on the produce of our guns. The traders, mostly young men from the eastern cities, were fine hearty fellows, who employ their capital in this trade because it combines pleasure with profit, and the excitement and danger of the journey through the Indian country are more agreeable than the monotonous life of a city merchant. The volunteers' camp was some three miles up the river on the other side. Colonel Doniphan, who commanded, had just returned from an expedition into the Navajo country for the purpose of making a treaty with the chiefs of that nation, who have hitherto been bitter enemies of the New Mexicans. From appearances no one would have imagined this to be a military encampment. The tents were in a line, but there all uniformity ceased. There were no regulations in force with regard to cleanliness. The camp was strewed with the bones and offal of the cattle slaughtered for its supply, and not the slightest attention was paid to keeping it clear from other accumulations of filth. The men, unwashed and unshaven, were ragged and dirty, without uniforms, and dressed as, and how, they pleased. They wandered about, listless and sickly-looking, or were sitting in groups playing at cards, and swearing and cursing, even at the officers if they interfered to stop it (as I witnessed). The greatest irregularities constantly took place. Sentries, or a guard, although in an enemy's country, were voted unnecessary; and one fine day, during the time I was here, three Navajo Indians ran off with a flock of eight hundred sheep belonging to the camp, killing the two volunteers in charge of them, and reaching the mountains in safety with their booty. Their mules and horses were straying over the country; in fact, the most total want of discipline was apparent in everything. These very men, however, were as full of fight as game cocks, and shortly after defeated four times their number of Mexicans at Sacramento, near Chihuahua.

The American can never be made a soldier; his constitution will not bear the restraint of discipline, neither will his very mistaken notions about liberty allow him to subject himself to its necessary control. In a country abounding with all the necessaries of life, and where any one of physical ability is at no loss for profitable employment; moreover, where, from the nature of the country, the lower classes lead a life free from all the restraint of society, and almost its conventional laws, it is easy to conceive that it would require great inducements for a man to enter the army and subject himself to discipline for the sake of the trifling remuneration, when so many other sources of profitable employment are open to him. For these reasons the service is unpopular, and only resorted to by men who are either too indolent to work, or whose bad characters prevent them seeking other employment.

The volunteering service on the other hand is eagerly sought, on occasions such as the present war with Mexico affords, by young men even of the most respectable classes, as, in this, discipline exists but in name, and they have privileges and rights, such as electing their own officers, &c., which they consider to be more consonant to their ideas of liberty and equality. The system is palpably bad, as they have sufficiently proved in this war. The election of officers is made entirely a political question, and quite irrespective of their military qualities, and, knowing the footing on which they stand with the men, they, if even they know how, are afraid to exact of them either order or discipline. Of drill or manœuvring the volunteers have little or no idea. "Every man on his own hook" is their system in action; and trusting to, and confident in, their undeniable bravery, they "go ahead," and overcome all obstacles. No people know better the advantages of discipline than do the officers of the regular service; and it is greatly to their credit that they can keep the standing army in the state it is. As it is mostly composed of foreigners—Germans, English, and Irish, and deserters from the British army—they might be brought to as perfect a state of discipline as any of the armies of Europe; but the feeling of the people will not permit it; the public would at once cry out against it as contrary to republican notions and the liberty of the citizen.

There is a vast disparity between the officers of the regular army and the men they command. Receiving at Westpoint (an admirable institution) a military education by which they acquire a practical as well as theoretical knowledge of the science of war, as a class they are probably more distinguished for military knowledge than the officers of any European army. Uniting with this a high chivalrous feeling and most conspicuous gallantry, they have all the essentials of the officer and soldier. Notwithstanding this, they have been hitherto an unpopular class in the United States, being accused of having a tendency to aristocratic feeling, but rather, I do believe, from the marked distinction in education and character which divides them from the mass, than any other reason. However, the late operations in Mexico have sufficiently proved that to their regular officers alone, and more particularly to those who have been educated at the much-decried Westpoint, are to be attributed the successes which have everywhere attended the American arms; and it is notorious that on more than one occasion the steadiness of the small regular force, and particularly of the artillery, under their command, has saved the army from most serious disasters.

I remained at Valverde encampment several days in order to recruit my animals before proceeding farther to the north, passing the time in hunting; game, although driven from the vicinity of the camp, being still plentiful at a little distance. Besides deer and antelope, turkeys were very abundant in the river bottom; and, of lesser game, hares, rabbits, and quail were met with on the plain, and geese and ducks in the river.

One day I got a shot at a panther (painter), but did not kill it, as my old mule was so disturbed at the sight of the beast, that she refused to remain quiet. The prairie between the Del Norte and the mountain, a distance of twelve or fourteen miles, is broken into gulleys and ravines, which intersect it in every direction. At the bottom of these is a thick growth of coarse grass and grease-bushes, where the deer love to resort in the middle of the day. I was riding slowly up one of these cañons, with my rifle across the saddle-bow, and the reins thrown on the mule's neck, being at that moment engaged in lighting my pipe, when the mule pricked her ears and turned her head to one side very suddenly, giving a cant round at the same time. I looked to the right, and saw a large panther, with his tail sweeping the ground, trotting leisurely up the side of the ravine, which rose abruptly from the dry bed of a water-course, up which I was proceeding. The animal, when it had reached the top, turned round and looked at me, its tiger-like ears erect, and its tail quivering with anger. The mule snorted and backed, but, fearing to dismount, lest the animal should run off, I raised my rifle and fired both barrels at the beast, which, giving a hissing growl, bounded away unhurt.

It was, however, dangerous to go far from the camp, as Apaches and Navajos were continually prowling round, and, as I have mentioned, had killed two of the volunteers, and stolen 800 sheep. One day, while hunting, I came upon a fire which they had just left, and, as several oxen were lost that night, this party, which, from the tracks, consisted of a man, woman, and boy, had doubtless run them off. I was that day hunting in company with a French Canadian and an American, both trappers and old mountain-men, when, at sundown, just as we had built a fire and were cooking our suppers under some trees near the river, we heard the gobble-gobble of an old turkey-cock, as he called his flock to roost. Lying motionless on the ground, we watched the whole flock, one after another, fly up to the trees over our heads, to the number of upwards of thirty. There was still light enough to shoot, and the whole flock was within reach of our rifles, but, as we judged that we could not hope for more than one shot apiece, which would only give three birds, we agreed to wait until the moon rose, when we might bag the whole family.

Hardly daring to move, we remained quiet for several hours, as the moon rose late, consoling ourselves with our anticipations of a triumphal entry into camp, on the morrow, with twenty or thirty fine turkeys for a Christmas feast.

At length the moon rose, but unfortunately clouded: nevertheless we thought there was sufficient light for our purpose, and, rifle in hand, approached the trees where the unconscious birds were roosting. Creeping close along the ground, we stopped under the first tree we came to, and, looking up, on one of the topmost naked limbs was a round black object. The *pas* was given to me, and, raising my rifle, I endeavoured to obtain a sight, but the light was too obscure to draw "a bead," although there appeared no difficulty in getting a level. I fired, expecting to hear the crash of the falling bird follow the report, but the black object on the tree never moved. My companions chuckled, and I fired my second barrel with similar result, the bird still remaining perfectly quiet. The Canadian then stepped forth, and, taking a deliberate aim, bang he went.

"Sacré enfant de Gârce!" he exclaimed, finding he too had missed the bird; "I aim straight, mais light très bad, sacré!"

Bang went the other's rifle, and bang-bang went my two barrels immediately after, cutting the branch in two on which the bird was sitting, who, thinking this a hint to be off, and that he had sufficiently amused us, flew screaming away. The same compliments were paid to every individual, one bird standing nine shots before it flew off: and, to end the story, we fired away every ball in our pouches without as much as touching a feather; the fact of the matter being, that the light was not sufficient to see an object through the fine sight of the rifles.

At Valverde my Mexican servant deserted, why or wherefore I could not understand, as he did not even wait for his pay, and carried off no equivalent. I also left here the Mexico-Irishman who had accompanied me from Mapimi. He was already suffering from the severities of the climate, and, being very delicate, I did not think him able to stand a winter journey over the Rocky Mountains. He therefore returned to Chihuahua with one of the traders. From this point to my winter quarters in the mountains I was entirely on my own resources, being unable to hire a servant in whom I could place the least confidence, and preferring to shift for myself, rather than be harassed with being always on the watch to prevent my fidus Achates from robbing or murdering me. My animals gave me little or no trouble, and I had now reduced my requa to five, having left at El Paso the tierra caliente horse, another having died on the road, and a mule having been lost or strayed on the Del Norte. In travelling I had no difficulty with the pack and loose mules. I rode in front on Panchito, and the mules followed like dogs, never giving me occasion even to turn round to see if they were there; for if, by any accident, they lost sight of the horse, and other animals were near, they would gallop about smelling at each, and often, starting off to horses or mules feeding at a distance, would return at full gallop, crying with terror until they found their old friend. Panchito, on his part, showed equal signs of perturbation if they remained too far behind, as sometimes they would stop for a mouthful of grass, and, turning his head, would recall them by a loud neigh, which invariably had the effect of bringing them up at a hand-gallop.

The greatest difficulty I experienced was in packing the mules, which operation, when on an aparejo, or Mexican pack-saddle, is the work of two men, and I may as well describe the process.

The equipment of a pack-mule—mula de carga—consists first and foremost of the aparejo, which is a square pad of stuffed leather. An idea of the shape may be formed by taking a book and placing it saddle-fashion on any object, the leaves being equally divided, and each half forming a flap of the saddle. This is placed on the mule's back on a *xerga*, or saddle-cloth, which has under it a *salea*, raw sheep-skin softened by the hand, which prevents the saddle chafing the back. The aparejo is then secured by a broad grass-band, which is drawn so tight, that the animal appears cut in two, and groans and grunts most awfully under the operation, which to a greenhorn seems most unnecessary and cruel. It is in this, however, that the secret of packing a mule consists; the firmer the pack-saddle, the more comfortably the mule travels, and with less risk of being "*matada*," literally killed, but meaning chafed and cut.

The *carga* is then placed on the top, if a single pack; or if two of equal size and weight, one on each side, being coupled together by a rope, which balances them on the mule's back: a stout pack-rope is then thrown over all, drawn as tight as possible under the belly, and laced round the packs, securing the load firmly in its place. A square piece of matting—*petate*—is then thrown over the pack to protect it from rain, the tapojos is removed from the mule's eyes, and the operation is complete. The tapojos—blinker—is a piece of thin embroidered leather, which is placed over the mule's eyes before being packed, and, thus blinded, the animal remains perfectly quiet. The cargador stands on the near side of the pack, his assistant on the other, hauling on the slack of the rope, with his knee against the side of the mule for a purchase; when the rope is taut, he cries "*Adios!*" and the packer, rejoining "*Vaya!*" makes fast the rope on the top of the carga, sings out "*Anda!*" and the mule trots off to her companions, who feed round until all the mules of the *atajo* are packed.

Muleteering is the natural occupation of the Mexican. He is in all his glory when travelling as one of the mozos of a large *atajo*—a caravan of pack-mules; but the height of his ambition is to attain the rank of *mayor-domo* or *capitan*—(the *brigadero* of Castile). The atajos, numbering from fifty to two hundred mules, travel a daily distance—*jornada*—of twelve or fifteen miles, each mule carrying a pack weighing from two to four hundred pounds. To a large atajo eight or ten muleteers are attached, and the dexterity and quickness with which they will saddle and pack an atajo of a hundred mules is surprising. The animals being driven to the spot, the lasso whirls round the head of the muleteer, and falls over the head of a particular mule. The tapojos is placed over the eyes, the heavy aparejo adjusted, and the pack secured, in three minutes. On reaching the place where they purpose to encamp, the pack-saddles are all ranged in regular order, with the packs between, and covered with the petates, a trench being cut round them in wet weather to carry off the rain. One mule is always packed with the *metate*—the stone block upon which the maize is ground to make tortillas, and the office of cook is undertaken in turn by each of the muleteers. Frijoles and chile colorado comprise their daily bill of fare, with a drink of pulque when passing through the land of the maguey.

CHAPTER XXII.

Leave Valverde—San Antonio—Socorro—New Mexicans—Beggars—Houses—*Limitar*—*Bosque Redondo*—Albuquerque—British Deserter—*Bernalillo*—A Stampede—*San Felipe*—Galistéo—Yankee Teamster—In Sight of Santa Fé—Arrival.

On the 14th of December the camp was broken up, the traders proceeding to Fray Cristoval, at the entrance of the jornada, to wait the arrival of the troops, which were about to advance on Chihuahua; and myself, in company with Lieutenant Abert's party, en route to Santa Fé. Crossing the Del Norte, we proceeded on its right bank ten or twelve miles, encamping in the bottom near the new settlement of San Antonio, a little hamlet of ten or twelve log-huts, inhabited by pastores and vaqueros—shepherds and cattle-herders. The river is but thinly timbered here, the soil being arid and sterile; on the bluffs, however, the grass is very good, being the *gramma* or feather-grass, and numerous flocks of sheep are sent hither to pasture from the settlements higher up the stream.

The next day we passed through Socorro, a small, wretched place, the first settlement of New Mexico on the river. The houses are all of adobe, inside and out, one story high, and with the usual azotea or flat roof. They have generally a small window, with thin sheets of talc (which here abounds) as a substitute for glass. They are, however, kept clean inside, the mud-floors being watered and swept many times during the day. The faces of the women were all stained with the fiery red juice of a plant called *alegria*, from the forehead to the chin. This is for the purpose of protecting their skin from the effects of the sun, and preserving them in untanned beauty to be exposed in the fandangos. Of all people in the world the Mexicans have the greatest antipathy to water, hot or cold, for ablutionary purposes. The men never touch their faces with that element, except in their bi-monthly shave; and the women besmear themselves with fresh coats of alegria when their faces become dirty: thus their countenances are covered with alternate strata of paint and dirt, caked, and cracked in fissures. My first impressions of New Mexico were anything but favourable, either to the country or the people. The population of Socorro was wretched-looking, and every countenance seemed marked by vice and debauchery. The men appear to have no other employment than smoking and basking in the sun, wrapped in their sarapes; the women in dancing and intrigue. The appearance of Socorro is that of a dilapidated brick-kiln, or a prairie-dog town; indeed, from these animals the New Mexicans appear to have derived their style of architecture. In every village we entered, the women flocked round us begging for tobacco or money, the men loafing about, pilfering everything they could lay their hands on. As in other parts of Mexico, the women wore the enagua, or red petticoat, and reboso, and were all bare-legged. The men were some of them clad in buckskin shirts, made by the Indians. Near Socorro is a mining sierra, where gold and silver have been extracted in small quantities. All along the road we met straggling parties of the volunteers, on horse or mule-back, and on foot. In every camp they usually lost some of their animals, one or two of which our party secured. The five hundred men who were on the march covered an extent of road of more than a hundred miles—the ammunition and provision waggons travelling through an enemy's country without escort!

On the 16th we passed through Limitar, another wretched village, and a sandy, desert country, quite uninhabited, camping again on the Del Norte; and next day, stopping an hour or two at Sabanal, we reached Bosque Redondo, the hacienda of one of the Chaves family, and one of the *ricos* of New Mexico.

The churches in the villages of New Mexico are quaint little buildings, looking, with their adobe-walls, like turf-stacks. At each corner of the façade half a dozen bricks are erected in the form of a tower, and a centre ornament of the same kind supports a wooden cross. They are really the most extraordinary and primitive specimens of architecture I ever met with, and the decorations of the interior are equal to the promises held out by the imposing outside.

The houses are entered by doors which barely admit a full-grown man; and the largest of New Mexican windows is but little bigger than the ventilator of a summer hat. However, in his rabbit-burrow, and with his tortillas and his chile, his *ponche*[*] and cigar of hoja,[†] the New-Mexican is content; and with an occasional traveller to pilfer, or the excitement of a stray Texan or two to massacre now and then, is tolerably happy; his only care being, that the river rise high enough to fill his *acequia*, or irrigating ditch, that sufficient maize may grow to furnish him tortillas for the winter, and shucks for his half-starved horse or mule, which the Navajos have left, out of charity, after killing half his sons and daughters, and bearing into captivity the wife of his bosom.

We encamped behind the house at Bosque Redondo, for which privilege I asked permission of the proprietor; and who doled us out six pennyworth of wood for our fires, never inviting us into his house, or offering the slightest civility. Cosas de Mejico.

On the 17th we reached Albuquerque, next to Santa Fé the most important town in the province, and the residence of the ex-Governor Armijo. We found here a squadron of the 1st United States dragoons, the remainder of the regiment having accompanied General Kearney to California. We encamped near a large building where the men were quartered; and in the evening a number of them came round the fire, asking the news from the lower country. I saw that some of them had once worn a different-coloured uniform from the sky-blue of the United States army; and in the evening, as I was walking with some of the officers of the regiment, I was accosted by one, whom I immediately recognised as a man named Herbert, a deserter from the regiment to which I had once belonged. He had imagined that, as several years had elapsed since I had seen him, his face would not have been familiar to me, and inquired for a brother of his who was still in the regiment, denying at first that he had been in the British service.

The settled portion of the province of New Mexico is divided into two sections, which, from their being situated on the Rio del Norte, are designated Rio Arriba and Rio Abajo, or up the river and down the river. Albuquerque is the chief town of the latter, as Santa Fé is of the former as well as the capital of the province.

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[*] A pungent tobacco grown in New Mexico.

[†] Hoja, corn-shuck, leaves of Indian corn.

The town and the estates in the neighbourhood belong to the Armijo family; and the General of that name, and ex-Governor, has here a *palacio;* and has also built a barrack, in which to accommodate the numerous escort which always attends him in his progresses to and from his country-seat.

The families of Armijo, Chaves, Peréa, and Ortiz are *par excellence* the ricos of New Mexico—indeed, all the wealth of the province is concentrated in their hands; and a more grasping set of people, and more hard-hearted oppressors of the poor, it would be difficult to find in any other part of Mexico, where the rights or condition of the lower classes are no more considered, than in civilised countries is the welfare of dogs and pigs.

I had letters to the Señora Armijo, the wife of the runaway Governor; but, as it was late at night when we arrived, and as I intended to leave the next morning, I did not think it worth while to present them, merely delivering to the mayor-domo some private letters which had been intrusted to my care from Chihuahua. However, as I passed the windows of the sala, I had a good view of the lady, who was once celebrated as the belle of New Mexico. She is now a fat, comely dame of forty, with the remains of considerable beauty, but quite *passée.*

Our halting-place next day was at Bernalillo, a more miserable place than usual; but as I had brought letters to a wealthy haciendado, one Julian Peréa, I anticipated an unusual degree of hospitality. On presenting the letter, everything Don Julian possessed was instantly thrown at my feet; but out of the magnificent gift I only selected an armful of wood, from a large yardful, for our fire, and for which he charged me three rials, as well as three more for the use of an empty corral for the animals; we ourselves encamping outside his gate on the damp thawing snow, without receiving the ghost of an invitation to enter his house.

We this day got a first glimpse of one of the spurs of the Rocky Mountains, appearing, far in the distance, white with snow.

On the 20th we encamped in a pretty valley on the Rio Grande, under a high tabular bluff which overhangs the river on the western bank; and on the summit of which are the ruins of an old Indian village. About two miles from our camp was the Pueblo of San Felipe, a village of the tribe of Indians known as Pueblos, or Indios Manzos—half-civilised Indians.

During the night our mulada, which was grazing at large in the prairie, was stampeded by the Indians. I was lying out some distance from the fire, when the noise of their thundering tread roused me, and, as they passed the fire at full gallop, I at once divined the cause. Luckily for me, Panchito, my horse, wheeled out of the crowd, and, followed by his mules, galloped up to the fire, and came to me when I whistled; the remainder of the mulada continuing their flight. The next morning, two fine horses and three mules were missing, and, of course, were not recovered.

The next day we encamped on Galistéo, a small stream coming from the mountains. We had now entered a wild broken country, covered with pine and cedar. A curious ridge runs from east to west, broken here and there by abrupt chasms, which exhibit its formation in alternate strata of shale and old red sandstone. There are here indications of coal, which are met along the whole of this ridge. We encamped on a bleak bluff, without timber or grass, which overlooked the stream. Late in the evening we heard the creaking of a waggon's wheels, and the wo-ha of the driver, as he urged his oxen up the sandy bluff. A waggon drawn by six yoke of oxen soon made its appearance, under the charge of a tall raw-boned Yankee. As soon as he had unyoked his cattle, he approached our fire, and, seating himself almost in the blaze, stretching his long legs at the same time into the ashes, he broke out with, "Cuss sich a darned country, I say! Wall, strangers, an ugly camp this, I swar; and what my cattle ull do I don't know, for they have not eat since we put out of Santa Fé, and are darned near giv out, that's a fact; and thar's nothin' here for 'em to eat, surely. Wall, they must just hold on till to-morrow, for I have only got a pint of corn apiece for 'em to-night anyhow, so there's no two ways about that. Strangers, I guess now you'll have a skillet among ye; if yer a mind to trade, I'll just have it right off; anyhow, I'll just borrow it to-night to bake my bread, and, if yer wish to trade, name your price. Cuss sich a darned country, say I! Jist look at them oxen, wull ye!—they've nigh upon two hundred miles to go; for I'm bound to catch up the sogers afore they reach the Pass, and there's not a go in 'em."

"Well," I ventured to put in, feeling for the poor beasts, which were still yoked and standing in the river completely done up, "would it not be as well for you to feed them at once and let them rest?"

"Wall, I guess if you 'll some of you lend me a hand, I 'll fix 'em right off; tho', darn em! they 've giv me a pretty darned lot of trouble, they have, darn em! but the critturs will have to eat, I b'lieve."

I willingly lent him the aid he required, and also added to their rations some corn which my animals, already full, were turning up their noses at, and which the oxen greedily devoured. This done, he returned to the fire and baked his cake, fried his bacon, and made his coffee, his tongue all the while keeping up an incessant clack. This man was by himself, having a journey of two hundred miles before him, and twelve oxen and his waggon to look after: but dollars, dollars, dollars was all he thought of. Everything he saw lying about he instantly seized, wondered what it cost, what it was worth, offered to trade for it or anything else by which he might turn a penny, never waiting for an answer, and rattling on, eating, drinking, and talking without intermission; and at last, gathering himself up, said, "Wall, I guess I 'll turn into my waggon now, and some of you will, may be, give a look round at the cattle every now and then, and I 'll thank you:" and saying this, with a hop, step, and a jump, was inside his waggon and snoring in a couple of minutes.

We broke up camp at daybreak, leaving our friend wo-ha-ing his cattle through the sandy bottom, and "cussing the darned country" at every step. We crossed several ridges clothed with cedars, but destitute of grass or other vegetation; and passing over a dismal plain descended into a hollow, where lay, at the bottom of a pine-covered mountain, the miserable mud-built Santa Fé; and shortly after, wayworn and travel-stained, and my poor animals in a condition which plainly showed that they had seen some hard service, we entered the city, after a journey of not much less than two thousand miles.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Santa Fé—Population of—Town—Pueblo Indians—Aridity of Soil—New Mexican Settlements—Gold-Mines—New Mexicans—Ancient Mexicans—Traditions of Indians—Quetzalcoatl—Migration of Aztecs—Indian Tribes in New Mexico—The Moquis—Ruins of Cities—Welsh Indians—Dress of Pueblos—Revolutions—Leave Santa Fé—Wolf—Indian Welcome—La Cañada—El Embudo—Cross the Mountain—Scenery—Ice—Arrive at Taos.

SANTA FÉ, the capital of the province of Nuevo Mejico, contains about three thousand inhabitants, and is situated about fourteen miles from the left bank of the Del Norte, at the foot of a mountain forming one of the eastern chain of the Rocky Mountains. The town is a wretched collection of mud-houses, without a single building of stone, although it boasts a palacio—as the adobe residence of the Governor is called—a long low building, taking up the greater part of one side of the plaza or public square, round which runs a portal or colonnade supported by pillars of rough pine. The appearance of the town defies description, and I can compare it to nothing but a dilapidated brick-kiln or a prairie-dog town. The inhabitants are worthy of their city, and a more miserable, vicious-looking population it would be impossible to imagine. Neither was the town improved, at the time of my visit, by the addition to the population of some three thousand Americans, the dirtiest, rowdiest crew I have ever seen collected together.

Crowds of drunken volunteers filled the streets, brawling and boasting, but never fighting; Mexicans, wrapped in sarape, scowled upon them as they passed; donkey-loads of hoja—corn-shucks—were hawking about for sale; and Pueblo Indians and priests jostled the rude crowds of brawlers at every step. Under the portales were numerous monté-tables, surrounded by Mexicans and Americans. Every other house was a grocery, as they call a gin or whisky shop, continually disgorging reeling drunken men, and everywhere filth and dirt reigned triumphant.

The extent of the province of New Mexico is difficult to define, as the survey of the northern sections of the republic has never been undertaken,* and a great portion of the country is still in the hands of the aborigines, who are at constant war with the Mexicans. It has been roughly estimated at 6000 square miles, with a population of 70,000, including the three castes of descendants of the original settlers, Mestizos, and Indios Manzos or Pueblos; the Mestizos, as is the case throughout the country, bearing a large proportion to the Mexico-Spanish portion of the population—in this case as 50 to 1.

The Pueblos, who are the original inhabitants of New Mexico, and, living in villages, are partially civilised, are the most industrious portion of the population, and cultivate the soil in a higher degree than the New Mexicans themselves. In these Indians, in their dwellings, their manners, customs, and physical character, may be traced a striking analogy to the Aztecans or ancient Mexicans. Their houses and villages are constructed in the same manner as, from existing ruins, we may infer that the Aztecans constructed theirs. These buildings are of two, three, and even five stories, without doors or any external communication, the entrance being at the top by means of ladders through a trap-door in the azotea or flat roof. The population of the different Pueblos scattered along the Del Norte and to the westward of it is estimated at 12,000, without including the Moquis, who have preserved their independence since the year 1680.

The general character of the department is extreme aridity of soil, and the consequent deficiency of water, which must ever prevent its being thickly settled. The valley of the Del Norte is fertile, but of very limited extent; and other portions of the province are utterly valueless in an agricultural point of view, and their metallic wealth is greatly exaggerated. From association with the hardy trappers and pioneers of the far west, the New Mexicans have in some degree imbibed a portion of their enterprise and hardihood; for settlements have been pushed far into the Rocky Mountains, whose inhabitants are many of them expert buffalo-hunters and successful trappers of beaver. The most northern of these is on the Rio Colorado, or Red

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* Lieutenant Abert, of the U. S. T. Engineers, surveyed the greater portion of New Mexico in 1846.

River Creek, an affluent of the Del Norte, rising in the eastern chain of the Rocky Mountains, one hundred miles north of Santa Fé.

Of the many so-called gold-mines in New Mexico there is but one which has in any degree repaid the labour of working. This is El Real de Dolores, more commonly known as El Placer, situated eight leagues from Santa Fé, on the ridge of the *Sierra Obscura.* The gold is mostly found in what is technically called "dust," in very small quantities and with considerable labour. It has perhaps produced, since its discovery in 1828, 200,000 dollars, but it is very doubtful if any of these placeres would repay the working on a large scale.

It is a favourite idea with the New Mexicans that the Pueblo Indians are acquainted with the existence and localities of some prodigiously rich mines, which in the early times of the conquest were worked by the Spaniards, at the expense of infinite toil and slavery on the part of the Indians; and that, fearing that such tyranny would be repeated if they were to disclose their secret, they have ever since steadily refused to point them out.

It is remarkable that, although existing, from the earliest times of the colonization of New Mexico, a period of two centuries, in a state of continual hostility with the numerous savage tribes of Indians who surround their territory, and in constant insecurity of life and property from their attacks—being also far removed from the enervating influences of large cities, and, in their isolated situation, entirely dependent upon their own resources—the inhabitants are totally destitute of those qualities which, for the above reasons, we might naturally have expected to distinguish them, and are as deficient in energy of character and physical courage, as they are in all the moral and intellectual qualities. In their social state but one degree removed from the veriest savages, they might take a lesson even from these in morality and the conventional decencies of life. Imposing no restraint on their passions, a shameless and universal concubinage exists, and a total disregard of moral laws, to which it would be impossible to find a parallel in any country calling itself civilized. A want of honourable principle, and consummate duplicity and treachery, characterize all their dealings. Liars by nature, they are treacherous and faithless to their friends, cowardly and cringing to their enemies; cruel, as all cowards are, they unite savage ferocity with their want of animal courage; as an example of which, their recent massacre of Governor Bent and other Americans may be given—one of a hundred instances.

I have before observed that a portion of the population of New Mexico consists of Indians, called Pueblos, from the fact of their living in towns, who are in a semi-civilized state, and in whose condition may be traced an analogy to the much exaggerated civilization of the ancient Mexicans. It is well known that, in the traditions of that people, the Aztecs migrated from the north, from regions beyond the Gila, where they made the first of their three great halts; but it is generally supposed that no traces of their course, or former habitation, existed to the northward of this river. In the country of the Navajoses, as well as in the territories of the independent Moqui, are still discoverable traces of their residence, and, as I have before remarked, the Pueblo Indians construct and inhabit houses and villages of the same form and material as the "casas grandes" of the ancient Mexicans; retain many of their customs and domestic arts, as they have been handed down to us, and numerous traces of a common origin.

Amongst many of the religious forms still retained by these people, perhaps the most interesting is the perpetuation of the holy fire, by the side of which the Aztecan kept a continual watch for the return to earth of Quetzalcoatl—the god of air—who, according to their tradition, visited the earth, and instructed the inhabitants in agriculture and other useful arts. During his sojourn he caused the earth to yield tenfold productions, without the necessity of human labour: everywhere corn, fruit, and flowers delighted the eye; the cotton-plant produced its woof already dyed by nature with various hues; aromatic odours pervaded the air; and on all sides resounded the melodious notes of singing-birds. The lazy Mexican naturally looks back to this period as the "golden age;" and as this popular and beneficent deity, on his departure from earth, promised faithfully to return and revisit the people he loved so well, this event is confidently expected to the present day. Quetzalcoatl embarked, in his boat of rattlesnake-skins, on the Gulf of Mexico; and as he was seen to steer to the eastward, his arrival is consequently looked for from that quarter. When the Spaniards arrived from the east, as they resembled the god in the colour of their skin, they were at first generally supposed to be messengers from, or descendants of, the god of air.

This tradition is common to the nations even of the far-off north, and in New Mexico the belief is still clung to by the Pueblo Indians, who in a solitary cave of the mountains have for centuries continued their patient vigils by the undying fire; and its dim light may still be seen by the wandering hunter glimmering from the recesses of a cave, when, led by the chase, he passes in the vicinity of this humble and lonely temple.

Far to the north, in the country of the Moquis, the hunters have passed, wonderingly, ruins of large cities, and towns inhabited by Indians, of the same construction as those of the Pueblos, and identical with the casas grandes on the Gila and elsewhere.

In the absence of any evidence, traditionary or otherwise, on which to found an hypothesis as to the probable cause of the migration of the Mexicans from the north, I have surmised that it is just possible that they may have abandoned that region on account of the violent volcanic convulsions which, from the testimony of people who have visited these regions, I have no doubt have at a comparatively recent period agitated that portion of the country; and from my own knowledge the volcanic formations become gradually more recent as they advance to the north along the whole table-land from Mexico to Santa Fé. These disturbances may have led to their frequent changes of residence, and ultimate arrival in the south. If their object was to fly from such constantly recurring commotions, their course would naturally be to the south, where they might expect a genial soil and climate, in a direction in which they might also avoid the numerous and warlike nations who inhabited the regions south of their abandoned country. Thus we find the remains of the towns built in the course of their migration, generally in insulated spots of fertility, oases in the vast and barren tracts they were obliged to traverse, which spread from the shores of the great salt-lake of the north towards the valley of the Gila, and still southward along the ridges of the Cordillera, which, a continuation of the Andes chain, stretch far away to the southern portion of the country.

The Indians of Northern Mexico, including the Pueblos, belong to the same family—the Apache; from which branch the Navajos, Apaches Coyoteros, Mescaleros, Moquis, Yubipias, Maricopas, Chiricaquis, Chemeguabas, Yumayas (the two last tribes of the Moqui), and the Nijoras, a small tribe on the Gila. All these speak dialects of the same language, more or less approximating to the Apache, and of all of which the idiomatic structure is the same. They likewise all understand each other's tongue. What relation this language bears to the Mexican is unknown, but my impression is that it will be found to assimilate greatly, if not to be identical.

The Pueblo Indians of Taos, Pecuris, and Acoma speak a language of which a dialect is used by those of the Rio Abajo, including the Pueblos of San Felipe, Sandia, Ysleta, and Xeméz. They are eminently distinguished from the New Mexicans in their social and moral character, being industrious, sober, honest, brave, and at the same time peaceably inclined if their rights are not infringed. Although the Pueblos are nominally Cristianos, and have embraced the outward forms of la santa fé Catolica, they yet, in fact, still cling to the belief of their fathers, and celebrate in secret the ancient rites of their religion. The aged and devout of both sexes may still be often seen on their flat house-tops, with their faces turned to the rising sun, and their gaze fixed in that direction from whence they expect, sooner or later, the god of air will make his appearance. They are careful, however, not to practise any of their rites before strangers, and ostensibly conform to the ceremonies of the Roman Church.

In the country of the Moquis are the remains of five cities of considerable extent, the foundations and some of the walls of which (of stone) are still standing, and on the sites of some they still inhabit villages, the houses of which are frequently built of the materials found amongst the ruins. A great quantity of broken pottery is found wherever these remains exist, the same in form and material as the relics of the same kind preserved in the city of Mexico. The ruins on the Gila, in particular, abound in these remains, and I have been assured that for many miles the plain is strewed with them. There are also remains of acequias, or irrigating canals, of great length and depth.

The five pueblos in the Moqui are Orayxa, Masanais, Jongoapi, Gualpi, and another, the name of which is not known. This tribe is, curiously enough, known to the trappers and hunters of the mountains as the Welsh Indians. They are, they say, much fairer in complexion than other tribes, and have several individuals amongst them perfectly white, with light hair. The latter circumstance is accounted for by the frequent occurrence amongst the Navajos, and probably the Moquis also, of albinos, with the Indian feature, but light complexions, eyes, and hair.

In connection with this, I may mention a curious circumstance which happened to me, and tends to show that there is some little foundation for the belief of the trappers, that the Moqui Indians are descendants of the followers of Prince Madoc.

I happened on my arrival at the frontier of the United States (at Fort Leavenworth) to enter the log hut of an old negro woman, being at the time in my mountain attire of buckskins, over which was thrown a Moqui or Navajo blanket, as it was wet weather. The old dame's attention was called to it by its varied and gaudy colours, and, examining it carefully for some time, she exclaimed, "That's a Welsh blanket; I know it by the woof!" She had, she told me, in her youth, lived for many years in a Welsh family and in a Welsh settlement in Virginia, or one of the southern States, and had learned their method of working, which was the same as that displayed in my blanket. The blankets and tilmas manufactured by the Navajos, Moquis, and the Pueblos, are of excellent quality, and dyed in durable and bright colours: the warp is of cotton filled with wool, the texture close and impervious to rain. Their pottery is, as I have before remarked, the same as that manufactured by the Aztecs, painted in bright patterns by coloured earths and the juice of several plants. The dress of the Pueblos is a mixture of their ancient costume with that introduced by the Spaniards. A tilma, or small blanket without sleeves, is worn over the shoulder, and their legs and feet are protected by mocassins and leggings of deerskin or woollen stuff. Their heads are uncovered, and their hair long and unconfined, save the centre or scalp lock, which is usually bound with gay-coloured ribbon. The women's dress is the same as that of the squaws of the wild Indians of the prairies, generally covered with a bright-coloured blanket, or a mantle of cloth.

The Pueblo Indians have been more than once the chief actors in the many insurrections which have disturbed this remote province. In 1837 they overturned the government, killing the incapable man at the head of it, as they had done his predecessor, and placing one of their own party at the head of affairs. Recently they rose upon the Americans, who have taken possession of the country, and, in conjunction with the Mexicans, massacred Governor Bent and many others. They were defeated by the American troops in a pitched battle at La Cañada, but defended most gallantly their chief pueblo (of Taos), which was taken and destroyed after a desperate resistance.

Although I had determined to remain some time in Santa Fé to recruit my animals, I was so disgusted with the filth of the town, and the disreputable society a stranger was forced into, that in a very few days I once more packed my mules, and proceeded to the north, through the valley of Taos.

It was a cold, snowy day on which I left Santa Fé, and the mountain, although here of inconsiderable elevation, was difficult to cross on account of the drifts. My mules, too, were for the first time introduced to snow on a large scale, and, by their careful, mincing steps and cautious movements, testified their doubts as to the security of such a road. The mountain is covered with pine and cedar, and the road winds through the bed of an arroyo, between high banks now buried in the snow. Not a living thing was visible, but once a large grey wolf was surprised on our turning a corner of rock, and in his hurry to escape plunged into a snowdrift, where I could easily have despatched the animal with a pistol, but Panchito was in such a state of affright that nothing would induce him to stand still or approach the spot.

Over ridges and through mountain-gorges we passed into a small valley, where the pueblo of Ohuaqui afforded me shelter for the night, and a warm stable with plenty of corn for my animals, a luxury they had long been unaccustomed to.

I was here made welcome by the Indian family, who prepared my supper of frijoles and atole, the last *the* dish of New Mexico. It is made of the Indian meal, mixed with water into a thick gruel, and thus eaten—an insipid compound. Far more agreeable is the pinole of the tierra afuera, which is the meal of parched maize, mixed with sugar and spices, and of which a handful in a pint of water makes a most cooling and agreeable drink, and is the great standby of the arrieros and road-travellers in that starving country.

The patrona of the family seemed rather shy of me at first, until, in the course of conversation, she discovered that I was an Englishman. "Gracias a Dios," she exclaimed, "a Christian will sleep with us to-night, and not an American!"

I found over all New Mexico that the most bitter feeling and most determined hostility existed against the Americans, who certainly in Santa Fé and elsewhere have not been very anxious to conciliate the people, but by their bullying and overbearing demeanour towards them, have in a great measure been the cause of this hatred, which shortly after broke out in an organized rising of the northern part of the province, and occasioned great loss of life to both parties.

After supper the women of the family spread the floor with blankets, and every one, myself included, cigar in mouth, lay down—to the number of fifteen—in a space of less than that number of square feet; men, women, and children, all smoking and chattering. Just over my head were roosting several fowls; and one venerable cock every five minutes saluted us with a shrill crow, to the infinite satisfaction of the old Indian, who at every fresh one exclaimed, "Ay, como canta mi gallo, tan claro!"—how clear sings my cock, the fine fellow! "Valgame Dios! que paxarito tan hermoso!"—what a lovely little bird is this!

The next day, passing the miserable village of La Cañada, and the Indian pueblo of San Juan, both situated in a wretched, sterile-looking country, we reached El Embudo—the funnel—where I put up in the house of an old Canadian trapper, who had taken to himself a Mexican wife, and was ending his days as a quiet ranchero. He appeared to have forgotten the plenty of the mountains, for his pretty daughter set before us for supper a plate containing six small pieces of fat pork, like dice, floating in a sea of grease, hot and red with chile colorado.

We crossed, next day, a range of mountains covered with pine and cedar: on the latter grew great quantities of mistletoe, and the contrast of its bright green and the sombre hue of the cedars was very striking. The snow was melting on the ascent, which was exposed to the sun, and made the road exceedingly slippery and tiring to the animals. On reaching the summit a fine prospect presented itself. The Rocky Mountains, stretching away on each side of me, here divided into several branches, whose isolated peaks stood out in bold relief against the clear, cold sky. Valleys and plains lay between them, through which the river wound its way in deep cañons. In the distance was the snowy summit of the Sierra Nevada, bright with the rays of the setting sun, and at my feet lay the smiling vale of Taos, with its numerous villages and the curiously constructed pueblos of the Indians. Snow-covered mountains surrounded it, whose ridges were flooded with light, while the valley was almost shrouded in gloom and darkness.

On descending I was obliged to dismount and lead my horse, whose feet, balled with snow, were continually slipping from under him. After sunset the cold was intense, and, wading through the snow, my mocassins became frozen, so that I was obliged to travel quickly to prevent my feet from being frost-bitten. It was quite dark when I reached the plain, and the night was so obscure that the track was perfectly hidden, and my only guide was the distant lights of the villages. Coming to a frozen brook, the mules refused to cross the ice, and I spent an hour in fruitless attempts to induce them. I could find nothing at hand with which to break the ice, and at length, half frozen, was obliged to turn back and retrace my steps to a rancho, which the Indian boy who was my guide said was about a mile distant. This I at length reached, though not before one of my feet was frost-bitten, and my hands so completely numbed by the excessive cold that I was unable to unpack the mules when I got in. To protect the poor animals from the cold, as there was no stable to place them in, I devoted the whole of my bedding to cover them, reserving to myself only a sarape, which, however, by the side of a blazing wood fire, was sufficient to keep me warm. The good lady of the house sent me a huge bowl of atole as I was engaged in clothing the animals, which I offered to Pámbito as soon as the messenger's back was turned, and he swallowed it boiling hot as it was, with great gusto.

The next morning, with the assistance of some rancheros, I crossed the stream, and arrived at Fernandez, which is the most considerable village in the valley.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Valley of Taos—Fernandez—Governor Bent—Start to the Mountains—Half-breed Guide—Mules and Ice—Benighted—Shelter—Hospitality—Arroyo Hondo—Turley's—Mormons—Cross Mountain—Feet Frozen—Rio Colorado—Mexican Valientes—Canadian Trapper—Valley of Red River—State of the Settlement—Adios Mejico!

El Valle de Taos is situated about eighty miles to the northward of Santa Fé, on the eastern side of the Del Norte. It contains several villages or rancherias, the largest of which are Fernandez and El Rancho. The population of the valley may be estimated at eight thousand, including the Pueblo Indians. The soil is exceedingly fertile, and produces excellent wheat and other grain. The climate being rigorous, and the summers short, fruit does not ripen to perfection, but vegetables of all kinds are good and abundant, onions in particular growing to great size and of excellent flavour. The climate is colder than at Santa Fé, the thermometer sometimes falling to zero in winter, and seldom rising above 75° in summer; the nights in summer being delightfully cool, but in winter piercingly cold. Although generally healthy, infectious disorders are sometimes prevalent and fatal; and periodical epidemics have on several occasions nearly decimated the inhabitants.

In all maps the valley of Taos is confounded with a city which under that name appears in them, but which does not exist, Fernandez being the chief town of the valley, and no such town as *Taos* to be found. The valley derives its name from the Taoses, a tribe of Indians who once inhabited it, and the remains of which inhabit a pueblo under the mountain about seven miles from Fernandez. Humboldt mentions Taos as a city containing 8900 inhabitants. Its latitude is about 36° 30′, longitude between 105° 30′ and 106° west of Greenwich, but its exact position has never been accurately determined. The extent of the valley from El Rancho to Arroyo Hondo is seventeen miles, the breadth from the Del Norte to the mountains about the same.

Several distilleries are worked both at Fernandez and El Rancho, the latter better known to Americans as The Ranch. Most of them belong to Americans, who are generally trappers and hunters, who having married Taos women have settled here. The Taos whisky, a raw fiery spirit which they manufacture, has a ready market in the mountains amongst the trappers and hunters, and the Indian traders, who find the "fire-water" the most profitable article of trade with the aborigines, who exchange for it their buffalo robes and other peltries at a "tremendous sacrifice."

In Fernandez I was hospitably entertained in the house of an American named Lee, who had for many years traded and trapped in the mountains, but who now, having married a Mexican woman, had set up a distillery and was amassing a considerable fortune. He gave me a pressing invitation to stop the winter with him, which I was well inclined to accept, if I could have obtained good pasture for my animals; that, however, was not to be had, and I continued my journey. A few days after my departure, Lee's house was attacked by the Mexicans, at the time when they massacred Governor Bent in the same village, and himself killed, with every foreigner in the place excepting the brother of Lee, who was protected by the priest and saved by him from the savage fury of the mob.

Bent, as well as Lee, had resided many years in New Mexico, both having wives and children in the country, and were supposed to have been much esteemed by the people. The former was an old trader amongst the Indians, and the owner of Bent's Fort, or Fort William, a trading-post on the Arkansa, well known for its hospitality to travellers in the far west. From his knowledge of the country and the Mexican character, Mr. Bent had been appointed Governor of New Mexico by General Kearney, and it was during a temporary visit to his family at Fernandez that he was killed in their presence, and scalped and mutilated, by a mob of Pueblos and the people of Taos.

William Bent was one of those hardy sons of enterprise with whom America abounds, who, from love of dangerous adventure, forsake the quiet monotonous life of the civilized world for the excitement of a sojourn in the far west. For many years he traded with Indians on the Platte and Arkansa, winning golden opinions from the poor Indians for his honesty and fair dealing, and the greatest popularity from the hardy trappers and mountaineers for his firmness of character and personal bravery.

Notwithstanding the advice I received not to attempt such a journey at this season, I determined to cross the mountains and winter on the other side, either at the head of Arkansa or Platte, or in some of the mountain-valleys, which are the wintering places of many of the trappers and mountain-men. I therefore hired a half-breed Pueblo as a guide, who, by the by, was one of the most rascally-looking of rascally Mexicans, and on the 1st of January was once more on my way.

I left Fernandez late in the day, as I intended to proceed only twelve miles to Arroyo Hondo, and there remain for the night. After proceeding a mile or two we came to a stream about thirty feet in breadth and completely frozen. Here the mules came to a stop, and nothing would induce them to attempt to cross. Even the last resource, that of crossing myself on Panchito, and pretending to ride away with their favourite, entirely failed, although they ran up and down the bank bellowing with affright, smelling the ice, feeling it with their fore feet, and, throwing up their heads, would gallop to another point, and up and down, in great commotion. At length I had to take a pole, which was opportunely lying near, and break the ice away, having to remove the broken blocks entirely before they would attempt it. With all this, however, my old hunting-mule still refused; but, as I knew she would not be left behind, I proceeded on with the rest. At this she became frantic, galloped away from the river, returned, bellowed and cried, and at last, driven to desperation, she made a jump right into the air, but not near the broken place, and came down like a lump of lead on the top of the ice, which, of course, smashed under her weight, and down she went into a deep hole, her head just appearing out of the water, which was "mush" with ice. In this "fix" she remained perfectly still, apparently conscious that her own exertions would be unavailing; and I therefore had to return, and, up to my middle in water, break her out of the ice, expecting every moment to see her drop frozen to death. At last, and with great labour, I extricated her, when she at once ran up to the horse and hinnied her delight at the meeting.

By this time it was pitchy dark, and the cold had become intense; my mocassins and deerskin leggings were frozen hard and stiff, and my feet and legs in a fair way of becoming in the same state. There was no road or track, the snow everywhere covering the country, and my guide had evidently lost his way. However, I asked him in which direction he thought Arroyo Hondo to be, and pushed straight on for it, floundering through the snow, and falling into holes and ravines, and at length was brought to a dead halt, my horse throwing himself on his haunches, and just saving his master and himself a fall down a precipice some 500 feet in depth, which formed one side of the Arroyo Hondo.

The lights of the rancho to which we were bound twinkled at the bottom, but to attempt to reach it, without knowing the road down the ravine, was like jumping from the top of the Monument. However, as I felt I was on the point of freezing to death, I became desperate and charged the precipice, intending to roll down with Panchito, if we could not do better; but the horse refused to move, and presently, starting to one side as I spurred him, fell headlong into a snow-drift some twenty feet in depth, where I lay under him; and, satisfied in my mind that I was "in extremis," wished myself further from Arroyo Hondo and deplored my evil destiny. Panchito, however, managed to kick himself out; and I, half smothered and with one of my ribs disabled, soon followed his example, and again mounted. We presently came to a little adobe house, and a man, hearing our cries to each other in the dark, came out with a light. To my request for a night's lodging he replied, "No se puede, no habia mas que un quartito"—that there was no room, but one little chamber, but that at the rancho I would be well accommodated. With this hint I moved on, freezing in my saddle, and again attempted to descend, but the darkness was pitchy, and the road a wall. Whilst attempting the descent once more, a light appeared on the bank above us, and a female voice crying out, "Vuelvase amigo, por Dios! que no se baja"—return, friend, for God's sake! and don't attempt to go down. "Que vengan, pobrecitos, para calentarse"—come, poor fellows, and warm yourselves. "Por hi se sube, por hi"—this way this is the way up—she cried to us, holding up the light to direct our steps. "Ay de mi, como suffren los pobres viageros!" —alas, what poor travellers suffer!—she exclaimed, eying our frozen appearance, and clothes white with snow; and, still holding up the light, she led the way to her house, where now, lectured by his wife for his inhospitality, the man who had sent us away from his door bestirred himself to unpack the mules, which, with our numbed hands, it was impossible for us to do.

A little shed full of corn-shucks (the leaf of the maize, of which animals are very fond) provided a warm shelter for the shivering beasts; and having attended to their wants, and piled before them enough hoja for a regiment of cavalry, I entered the house, where half a dozen women were soon rubbing life into my hands and feet, which were badly frost-bitten, whilst others were busy preparing atole and chile, and making tortillas on the hearth.

A white stone marks this day of my journey, when, for the first time, I met with native hospitality on Arroyo Hondo. In this family, which consisted of about fifteen souls, six were on their beds, suffering from *sarampion*—the measles—which was at the time of my journey carrying off many victims in Santa Fé and Taos Valley. An old crone was busy decocting simples in a large olla over the fire. She asked me to taste it, giving it the name of aceite de vivoras—rattlesnake-oil; and as I expressed my disgust by word and deed at the intimation, which just saved my taking a gulp, the old lady was convulsed with laughter, giving me to understand that it was not really viper-oil, but was so called—no mas. This pot, when cooked, was set on one side, and all the patients, one after the other, crawled from their blankets and imbibed the decoction from a gourd. One of the sick was the mother of the family, who had run after us to bring us back when her husband had told her of our situation—one instance of the many which I have met of the kindness of heart of Mexican women.

The next morning we descended into the Arroyo, and even in daylight the track down was exceedingly dangerous, and to have attempted it in the dark would have been an act of no little temerity. On the other bank of the stream was situated a mill and distillery belonging to an American by the name of Turley, who had quite a thriving establishment. Sheep and goats, and innumerable hogs, ran about the corral; his barns were filled with grain of all kinds, his mill with flour, and his cellars with whisky "in galore." Everything about the place betokened prosperity. Rosy children, uniting the fair complexions of the Anglo-Saxon with the dark tint of the Mexican, gambolled before the door. The Mexicans and Indians at work in the yard were stout, well-fed fellows, looking happy and contented; as well they might, for no one in the country paid so well, and fed so well, as Turley, who bore the reputation, far and near, of being as generous and kind-hearted as he was reported to be rich. In times of scarcity no Mexican ever besought his assistance and went away empty-handed. His granaries were always open to the hungry, and his purse to the poor.

Three days after I was there they attacked his house, burned his mill, destroyed his grain and his live stock, and inhumanly butchered himself and the foreigners with him, after a gallant defence of twenty-four hours—nine men against five hundred. Such is Mexican gratitude.

I here laid in a small supply of provisions, flour and dried buffalo-meat, and got besides a good breakfast—rather a memorable occurrence. Just as I arrived, a party of Mormons, who had left Colonel Cooke's command on their way to California, and were now about to cross the mountains to join a large body of their people who were wintering on the Arkansa, intending to proceed to California in the ensuing spring, were on the point of starting. There were some twelve or fifteen of them, raw-boned fanatics, with four or five pack-mules carrying their provisions, themselves on foot. They started several hours before me; but I overtook them before they had crossed the mountain, straggling along, some seated on the top of the mules' packs, some sitting down every few hundred yards, and all looking tired and miserable. One of the party was an Englishman, from Biddenden, in Kent, and an old Peninsular soldier. I asked what could have induced him to have undertaken such an expedition. He looked at me, and, without answering the question, said, "Dang it, if I only once get hoam!"

Arroyo Hondo runs along the base of a ridge of mountain of moderate elevation, which divides the valley of Taos from that of Rio Colorado, or Red River, both running into the Del Norte.

The trail from one to the other runs through and over the mountain, a distance of about twelve miles. It is covered with pine and cedar and a species of dwarf oak; and numerous small streamlets run through the cañons and gorges. Near these grows plentifully a shrub which produces a fruit called by the mountaineers service-berries, of a dark blue, the size of a small grape, and of very pleasant flavour.

My animals, unused to mountain travelling, proceeded very slowly. Every little stream of frozen water was the cause of delay. The mules, on reaching the brink, always held a council of war, smelt and tried it with their fore feet, and bellowed forth their dislike of the slippery bridge. Coronela, my hunting-mule, since her mishap at Fernandez, was always the first to cross, but I had first to strew the ice with branches, or throw a blanket over it, before I could induce them to pass; and at last, tired of the delays thus occasioned, I passed with the horse, and left the mules to use their own discretion, although not unfrequently half an hour or more would elapse before they overtook me.

All this day I marched on foot through the snow, as Panchito made sad work of ascending and descending the mountain, and it was several hours after sunset when I arrived at Rio Colorado, with one of my feet badly frozen. In the settlement, which boasted about twenty houses, on inquiry as to where I could procure a corral and hoja for the animals, I was directed to the house of a French Canadian—an old trapper named Laforey—one of the many who are found in these remote settlements, with Mexican wives, and passing the close of their adventurous lives in what to them is a state of ease and plenty; that is, they grow sufficient maize to support them, their faithful and well-tried rifles furnishing them with meat in abundance, to be had in all the mountains for the labour of hunting.

I was obliged to remain here two days, for my foot was so badly frozen that I was quite unable to put it to the ground. In this place I found that the Americans were in bad odour; and as I was equipped as a mountaineer, I came in for a tolerable share of abuse whenever I limped through the village. As my lameness prevented me from pursuing my tormentors, they were unusually daring, saluting me, every time I passed to the shed where my animals were corralled, with cries of "Burro,

burro, ven a comer hoja" (Jackass, jackass, come here and eat shucks), "Anda coxo, a ver los burros, sus hermanos" (Hallo, game-leg, go and see your brothers, the donkeys); and at last, words not being found heavy enough, pieces of adobe rattled at my ears. This, however, was a joke rather too practical to be pleasant; so, the next time I limped to the stable, I carried my rifle on my shoulder, which was a hint never to be mistaken by Mexican, and hereafter I passed with impunity. However, I was obliged to watch my animals day and night, for, as soon as I fed them, either the corn was bodily stolen, or a herd of hogs was driven in to feed at my expense. The latter aggression I put a stop to by administering to one persevering porker a pill from my rifle, and promised the threatening crowd that I would have as little compunction in letting the same amount of daylight into them if I caught them thieving the provender; and they seemed to think me in earnest, for I missed no more corn or shucks. I saw plainly enough, however, that my remaining here, with such a perfectly lawless and ruffianly crew, was likely to lead me into some trouble, if, indeed, my life was not in absolute danger, which, from what occurred shortly after, I have now no doubt it was; and therefore I only waited until my foot was sufficiently recovered to enable me to resume my journey across the mountains.

The fare in Laforey's house was what might be expected in a hunter's establishment: venison, antelope, and the meat of the carnero cimarron, the Rocky Mountain sheep, furnished his larder; and such meat (poor and tough at this season of the year), with cakes of Indian meal, either tortillas or gorditas,* furnished the daily bill of fare. The absence of coffee he made the theme of regret at every meal, bewailing his misfortune in not having at that particular moment a supply of this article, which he never before was without, and which I may here observe, amongst the hunters and trappers when in camp or rendezvous, is considered as an indispensable necessary. Coffee, being very cheap in the States, is the universal beverage of the western people, and finds its way to the mountains in the packs of the Indian traders, who retail it to the mountain-men at the moderate price of from two to six dollars the half-pint cup. However, my friend Laforey was never known to possess any, and his lamentations were only intended to soften my heart, as he thought (erroneously) that I must certainly carry a supply with me.

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* The *tortilla* is a round flat pancake, made of the Indian corn-meal; the *gordita* is of the same material, but thicker.

"Sacré enfant de Gârce," he would exclaim, mixing English, French, and Spanish into a puchero-like jumble, "voyez-vous dat I vas nevare tan pauvre as dis time; mais before I vas siempre avec plenty café, plenty sucre; mais now, God dam, I not go à Santa Fé, God dam, and mountain-men dey come aqui from autre côté, drink all my café. Sacré enfant de Gârce, nevare I vas tan pauvre as dis time, God dam. I not care comer meat, ni frijole, ni corn, mais widout café I no live. I hunt may be two, three day, may be one week, mais I eat notin; mais sin café, enfant de Gârce, I no live, parceque me not sacré Espagnol, mais one Frenchman."

Rio Colorado is the last and most northern settlement of Mexico, and is distant from Vera Cruz 2000 miles. It contains perhaps fifteen families, or a population of fifty souls, including one or two Yuta Indians, by sufferance of whom the New Mexicans have settled this valley, thus ensuring to the politic savages a supply of corn or cattle without the necessity of undertaking a raid on Taos or Santa Fé whenever they require a remount. This was the reason given me by a Yuta for allowing the encroachment on their territory.

The soil of the valley is fertile, the little strip of land which comprises it yielding grain in abundance, and being easily irrigated from the stream, the banks of which are low. The plain abounds with alegria, the plant from which the juice is extracted with which the belles of Nuevo Mejico cosmetically preserve their complexions. The neighbouring mountains afford plenty of large game—deer, bears, mountain-sheep, and elk; and the plains are covered with countless herds of antelope, which, in the winter, hang about the foot of the sierras, which shield them from the icy winds.

No state of society can be more wretched or degrading than the social and moral condition of the inhabitants of New Mexico: but in this remote settlement, anything I had formerly imagined to be the ne plus ultra of misery, fell far short of the reality:—such is the degradation of the people of the Rio Colorado. Growing a bare sufficiency for their own support, they hold the little land they cultivate, and their wretched hovels, on sufferance from the barbarous Yutas, who actually tolerate their presence in their country for the sole purpose of having at their command a stock of grain and a herd of mules and horses, which they make no scruple of helping themselves to, whenever they require a remount or a supply of farinaceous food. Moreover, when a war expedition against a hostile tribe has failed, and no scalps have been secured to ensure the returning warriors a welcome to their village, the Rio Colorado is a kind of game-preserve, where the Yutas have a certainty of filling their bag if their other covers draw blank. Here they can always depend upon procuring a few brace of Mexican scalps, when such trophies are required for a war-dance or other festivity, without danger to themselves, and merely for the trouble of fetching them.

Thus, half the year, the settlers fear to leave their houses, and their corn and grain often remain uncut, the Indians being near: thus the valiant Mexicans refuse to leave the shelter of their burrows even to secure their only food. At these times their sufferings are extreme, being reduced to the verge of starvation; and the old Canadian hunter told me that he and his son entirely supported the people on several occasions by the produce of their rifles, while the maize was lying rotting in the fields. There are sufficient men in the settlement to exterminate the Yutas, were they not entirely devoid of courage; but, as it is, they allow themselves to be bullied and ill-treated with the most perfect impunity.

Against these same Indians a party of a dozen Shawnee and Delaware trappers waged a long and most destructive war, until at last the Yutas were fain to beg for peace, after losing many of their most famous warriors and chiefs. The cowardly Mexicans, however, have seldom summoned courage to strike a blow in their own defence, and are so thoroughly despised by their savage enemies, that they never scruple to attack them, however large the party, or in spite of the greatest disparity in numbers between them.

On the third day, the inflammation in my frost-bitten foot having in some measure subsided, I again packed my mules, and, under a fusillade of very hard names from the peládos, turned my back on Mexico and the Mexicans.

Laforey escorted me out of the settlement to point out the trail (for roads now had long ceased), and, bewailing his hard fate in not having "plenty café avec sucre, God dam," with a concluding enfant de Gârce, he bid me good by, and recommended me to mind my hair—in other words, look out for my scalp. Cresting a bluff which rose from the valley, I turned in my saddle, took a last look of the adobes, and, without one regret, cried "Adios, Mejico!"

I had now turned my back on the last settlement, and felt a thrill of pleasure as I looked at the wild expanse of snow which lay before me, and the towering mountains which frowned on all sides, and knew that now I had seen the last (for some time at least) of civilized man under the garb of a Mexican sarape.

CHAPTER XXV.

Leave Red River—Antelope—A Shot—Wolves—Camp on Rib Creek—Snake Creek—Yuta Trail—Bowl Creek—Sociable Wolf—Day's Journey—El Vallecito—The Wind Trap—Comfortless Camp—Cross Wind Trap—View from Summit—Dismal Scene—Sufferings from Cold—Orphan Creek—Isolated Butte—The Greenhorn—Trappers' Lodges—Mountaineers—The San Carlos—Strike the Arkansa.

OUR course on leaving Red River was due north, my object being to strike the Arkansa near its head-waters on the other side of the Rocky Mountains, and follow as near as possible the Yuta trail, which these Indians use in passing from the Del Norte to the Bayou Salado, on their annual buffalo-hunts to that elevated valley.

Skirting a low range of mountains, the trail passes a valley upwards of fifty miles in length, intersected by numerous streams (called creeks by the mountain-men), which rise in the neighbouring highlands, and fall into the Del Norte, near its upper waters. Our first day's journey, of about twenty-five miles, led through the uplands at the southern extremity of the valley. These are covered with pine and cedar, and the more open plains with bushes of wild sage, which is the characteristic plant in all the elevated plains of the Rocky Mountains. On emerging from the uplands, we entered a level prairie, covered with innumerable herds of antelope. These graceful animals, in bands containing several thousands, trotted up to us, and, with pointed ears and their beautiful eyes staring with eager curiosity, accompanied us for miles, running parallel to our trail within fifty or sixty yards.

The cold in these regions is more intense than I ever remember to have experienced, not excepting even in Lower Canada; and when a northerly wind sweeps over the bleak and barren plains, charged as it is with its icy reinforcements from the snow-clad mountains, it assails the unfortunate traveller, exposed to all its violence, with blood-freezing blasts, piercing to his very heart and bones.

Such was the state of congelation I was in on this day that even the shot-tempting antelope bounded past unscathed! My hands, with fingers of stone, refused even to hold the reins of my horse, who travelled as he pleased, sometimes slueing round his stern to the wind, which was "dead ahead." Mattias, the half-breed who was my guide, enveloped from head to foot in blanket, occasionally cast a longing glance from out its folds at the provoking venison as it galloped past, muttering at intervals, "Jesus, Jesus, que carne"—what meat we're losing! At length, as a band of some three thousand almost ran over us, human nature, although at freezing-point, could no longer stand it. I jumped off Panchito, and, kneeling down, sent a ball from my rifle right into the "thick" of the band. At the report two antelopes sprang into the air, their forms being distinct against the horizon above the backs of the rest; and when the herd had passed, they were lying kicking in the dust, one shot in the neck, through which the ball had passed into the body of another. We packed a mule with the choice pieces of the meat, which was a great addition to our slender stock of dried provisions. As I was "butchering" the antelope, half a dozen wolves hung round the spot, attracted by the smell of blood; they were so tame, and hungry at the same time, that I thought they would actually have torn the meat from under my knife. Two of them loped round and round, gradually decreasing their distance, occasionally squatting on their haunches, and licking their impatient lips, in anxious expectation of a coming feast. I threw a large piece of meat towards them, when the whole gang jumped upon it, fighting and growling, and tearing each other in the furious melée. I am sure I might have approached near enough to have seized one by the tail, so entirely regardless of my vicinity did they appear. They were doubtless rendered more ravenous than usual by the uncommon severity of the weather, and, from the fact of the antelope congregating in large bands, were unable to prey upon these animals, which are their favourite food. Although rarely attacking a man, yet in such seasons as the present I have no doubt that they would not hesitate to charge upon a solitary traveller in the night, particularly as in winter they congregate in troops of from ten to fifty. They are so abundant in the mountains, that the hunter takes no notice of them, and seldom throws away upon the skulking beasts a charge of powder and lead.

This night we camped on Rib Creek, the Costilla of the New-Mexican hunters, where there was no grass for our poor animals, and the creek was frozen to such a depth, that, after the greatest exertions in breaking a hole through the ice, which was nearly a foot thick, they were unable to reach the water. It is a singular fact that during intense cold horses and mules suffer more from want of water than in the hottest weather, and often perish in the mountains when unable to procure it for two or three days in the frozen creeks. Although they made every attempt to drink, the mules actually kneeling in their endeavours to reach the water, I was obliged to give it them, one after the other, from a small tin cup which held half a pint, and from which the thirsty animals greedily drank. This tedious process occupied me more than an hour, after which there was another hour's work in hunting for wood, and packing it on our backs into camp. Before we had a fire going it was late in the night, and almost midnight before we had found a little grass and picketed the animals; all of which duties at last being effected, we cooked our collops of antelope-meat, smoked a pipe, and rolled ourselves in our blankets before the fire. All night long the camp was surrounded by wolves, which approached within a few feet of the fire, and their eyes shone like coals as they hovered in the bushes, attracted by the savoury smell of the roasting venison.

The next day we struck La Culebra, or Snake Creek, where we saw that the party of Mormons had encamped, and apparently halted a day, for more than ordinary pains had been taken to make their camp comfortable, and several piles of twigs, of the sage-bush and rushes, remained, of which they had made beds. However, we were obliged to go farther down the creek, as there was no firewood near the point where the trail crosses it, and there found a sheltered place with tolerable grass, and near an air-hole in the ice where the animals could drink. I remarked that in the vicinity of the Mormon camp no watering-place had been made for their animals, and, as we had seen no holes broken in the ice of the creeks we had passed, I concluded that these people had allowed their animals to shift for themselves, the consequences of which negligence were soon apparent in our farther advance.

The cold was so intense that I blanketed all my animals, and even then expected that some of the mules would have perished; for it snowed heavily during the night, and the storm ended in a watery sleet, which froze as soon as it fell, and in the morning the animals were covered with a sheet of ice. We ourselves suffered extremely, turning constantly, and rolling almost into the embers of the scanty fire; and towards daybreak I really thought I should have frozen bodily. My bedding consisted of two blankets—one of them a very thin one, which was all I had between my body and the snow; and the other, first soaked with the sleet and afterwards frozen stiff and hard, was more like a board than a blanket, and was in that state no protection against the cold. It is well known that the coldest period of the twenty-four hours is that immediately preceding the dawn of day. At this time one is generally awakened by the sensation of death-like chill, which penetrates into the very bones; and as the fire is by this time usually extinguished, or merely smouldering in the ashes, the duty of replenishing is a very trying process. To creep out of the blanket and face the cutting blast requires no little resolution; and, if there be more than one person in the camp, the horrible moment is put off by the first roused, in hopes that some one else will awaken and perform the duty. However, should the coughs and hems succeed in rousing all, it is ten to one but that all, with a blank look at the cheerless prospect, cover their heads with the blanket, and with a groan, cuddling into a ball, resettle themselves to sleep, leaving the most chilly victim to perform the office.

The half-frozen animals, standing over their picket-pins and collapsed with cold, seem almost drawn within themselves, and occasionally approach the fire as close as their lariats will allow, bending down their noses to the feeble warmth, the breath in steaming volumes of cloud issuing from their nostrils, whilst their bodies are thickly clad with a coat of frozen snow or sleet.

Our next camp was on La Trinchera, or Bowl Creek. The country was barren and desolate, covered with sage, and with here and there a prairie with tolerable pasture. Antelope were abundant, and deer and turkeys were to be seen on the creeks. The trail passed, to the westward, a lofty peak resembling in outline that one known as James's or Pike's Peak, which is some two hundred and fifty miles to the north. The former is not laid down in any of the maps, although it is a well-known landmark to the Indians.

The creeks are timbered with cotton-woods, quaking-asp, dwarf-oak, cedar, and wild cherry, all of small growth and stunted, while the uplands are covered with a dwarfish growth of pines. From Rio Colorado we had been constantly followed by a large grey wolf. Every evening, as soon as we got into camp, he made his appearance, squatting quietly down at a little distance, and after we had turned in for the night helping himself to anything lying about. Our first acquaintance commenced on the prairie where I had killed the two antelope, and the excellent dinner he then made, on the remains of the two carcases, had evidently attached him to our society. In the morning, as soon as we left the camp, he took possession, and quickly ate up the remnants of our supper and some little extras I always took care to leave for him. Shortly after he would trot after us, and, if we halted for a short time to adjust the mule-packs or water the animals, he sat down quietly until we resumed our march. But when I killed an antelope, and was in the act of butchering it, he gravely looked on, or loped round and round, licking his jaws, and in a state of evident self-gratulation. I had him twenty times a-day within reach of my rifle, but he became such an old friend that I never dreamèd of molesting him.

Our day's travel was usually from twenty to thirty miles, for the days were very short, and we were obliged to be in camp an hour before sunset, in order to procure wood, and water the animals before dark. Before arriving at the creek where we purposed to camp, I rode ahead, and selected a spot where was good grass and convenient water. We then unpacked the mules and horses, and immediately watered them, after which we allowed them to feed at large until dark. In the mean time we hunted for fire-wood, having sometimes to go half a mile from camp, packing it on our shoulders to the spot we intended for our fire, the mule-packs and saddles, &c., being placed to windward of it as a protection from the cold blasts. We then cooked supper, and at dark picketed the animals round the camp, their lariats (or skin-ropes) being attached to pegs driven in the ground. After a smoke, we spread our blankets before the fire and turned in, rising once or twice in the night to see that all was safe, and remove the animals to fresh grass when they had cleared the circle round their pickets. Guard or watch we kept none, for after a long day's travel it was too much for two of us to take alternate sentry, thus having but half the night for sleep.

We were now approaching a part of the journey much dreaded by the Indians and New-Mexican buffalo-hunters, and which is quite another "Jornada del Muerto," or dead man's journey. A creek called Sangre Cristo—blood of Christ—winds through a deep cañon, which opens out at one point into a small circular basin called El Vallecito—the little valley. It is quite embosomed in the mountains; and down their rugged sides, and through the deep gorges, the wind rushes with tremendous fury, filling the valley with drifted snow, and depositing it in the numerous hollows with which it is intersected. This renders the passage of the Vallecito exceedingly difficult and dangerous, as animals are frequently buried in the snow, which is sometimes fifteen or twenty feet deep in the hollows, and four or five on the level.

This valley is also called by the mountaineers the "Wind-trap;" a very appropriate name, as the wind seems to be caught and pent up here the year round, and, mad with the confinement, blows round and round, seeking for an escape.

Wishing to have my animals fresh for the passage of this dreaded spot, I this day made a short journey of fifteen miles, and camped in the cañon about three miles from the mouth of the Wind-trap. The cañon was so precipitous, that the only place I could find for our camp was on the side of the mountain, where was tolerably good gramma-grass, but a wretched place for ourselves; and we had to burrow out a level spot in the snow before we could place the packs in a position where they would not roll down the hill. The cedars were few and far between, and the snow covered everything in the shape of wood; and as in our last camp my tomahawk had been lost in the snow, I was unable to procure a log, and was fain to set fire to a cedar near which we had laid our packs. The flame, licking the stringy and dry bark, quickly ran up the tree, blazed along the branches in a roar of fire, illuminating the rugged mountain, and throwing its light upon the thread of timber skirting the creek which wound along the bottom far beneath.

All night long the wind roared through the cañon, and at times swept the blankets from our chilled bodies with the force of a giant. The mules and horses after dark refused to feed, and, as there was no spot near where we could picket them, the poor beasts sought shelter from the cruel blasts in the belt of dwarf oak which fringed the creek.

We passed a miserable night, perched upon the mountain-side in our lonely camp, and without a fire, for the tree was soon consumed. Our old friend the wolf, however, was still a companion, and sat all night within sight of the fire, howling piteously from cold and hunger. The next morning I allowed the animals a couple of hours after sunrise to feed and fill themselves; and then, descending from our camp, we entered at once the pass into the dreaded Vallecito. A few hundred yards from the entrance lay a frozen mule, half-buried in the snow; and a little farther on another, close to the creek where the Mormons had evidently encamped not two days before.

The Vallecito was covered with snow to the depth of three feet, to all appearance perfectly level, but in fact full of hollows, with fifteen or twenty feet of snow in them. With the greatest difficulty and labour we succeeded in crossing, having to dismount and beat a path through the drifts with our bodies. The pack-mules were continually falling, and were always obliged to be unpacked before they could rise. As this happened every score yards, more than half the day was consumed in traversing the valley, which cannot exceed four miles in length.

The mountain rises directly from the north end of the Vallecito, and is the dividing ridge between the waters of the Del Norte and the Arkansa or Rio Napeste of the Mexicans. The ascent to the summit, from the western side, is short, but very steep; and the snow was of such a depth that the mules could hardly make their way to the top. Leading my horse by the bridle, I led the way, and at length, numbed with cold, I reached the summit, where is a level plateau of about a hundred square yards. Attaining this, and exposed to the full sweep of the wind, a blast struck me, carrying with it a perfect avalanche of snow and sleet, full in my front, and knocked me as clean off my legs as I could have been floored by a twenty-four pound shot.

The view from this point was wild and dismal in the extreme. Looking back, the whole country was covered with a thick carpet of snow, but eastward it was seen in patches only here and there. Before me lay the main chain of the Rocky Mountains, Pike's Peak lifting its snowy head far above the rest; and to the south-east the Spanish Peaks (Cumbres Españolas) towered like twin giants over the plains. Beneath the mountain on which I stood was a narrow valley, through which ran a streamlet bordered with dwarf oak and pine, and looking like a thread of silver as it wound through the plain. Rugged peaks and ridges, snow-clad and covered with pine, and deep gorges filled with broken rocks, everywhere met the eye. To the eastward the mountains gradually smoothed away into detached spurs and broken ground, until they met the vast prairies, which stretched far as the eye could reach, and hundreds of miles beyond—a sea of seeming barrenness, vast and dismal. A hurricane of wind was blowing at the time, and clouds of dust swept along the sandy prairies, like the smoke of a million bonfires. On the mountain-top it roared and raved through the pines, filling the air with snow and broken branches, and piling it in huge drifts against the trees. The perfect solitude of this vast wildness was almost appalling. From my position on the summit of the dividing ridge I had a bird's-eye view, as it were, over the rugged and chaotic masses of the stupendous chain of the Rocky Mountains, and the vast deserts which stretched away from their eastern bases; while, on all sides of me, broken ridges, and chasms and ravines, with masses of piled-up rocks and uprooted trees, with clouds of drifting snow flying through the air, and the hurricane's roar battling through the forest at my feet, added to the wildness of the scene, which was unrelieved by the slightest vestige of animal or human life. Not a sound, either of bird or beast, was heard—indeed, the hoarse and stunning rattle of the wind would have drowned them, so loud it roared and raved through the trees.

The animals strove in vain to face the storm, and, turning their sterns to the wind, shrank into themselves, trembling with cold. Panchito, whom I was leading by the bridle, followed me to the edge of the plateau, but drew back, trembling, from the dismal scene which lay stretched below. With a neigh of fear he laid his cold nose against my cheek, seeming to say, "Come back, master: what can take you to such a wretched place as that, where not even a blade of grass meets the eye?"

The descent on the eastern side is steep and sudden, and through a thick forest of pines, to the valley beneath. Trail there was none to direct us, and my half-breed knew nothing of the road, having passed but once before, and many years ago, but said it went somewhere down the pines. The evening was fast closing round us, and to remain where we were was certain death to our animals, if not to ourselves: I therefore determined to push for the valley, and accordingly struck at once down the pines.

Once amongst the trees there was nothing to do but reach the bottom as fast as possible, as it was nearly dark, and nothing was to be seen at the distance of a dozen yards, so dense was the forest. Before we had proceeded as many paces from the edge of the plateau, and almost before I knew where I was, horses, mules, &c., were rolling down the mountain all together, and were at last brought up in a snow-drift some twelve feet deep. There they all lay in a heap, the half-breed under one of the pack-mules, and his swarthy face just peering out of the snow. Before a mule would stir every pack had to be removed; and this, with a temperature some ten degrees below zero, was trying to the fingers, as may be imagined. As it was impossible to reach the bottom from this point, we struggled once more to the top through six feet of snow and an almost perpendicular ascent. I had to beat a road for the animals, by throwing myself bodily on the snow, and pounding it down with all my weight. We were nearly frozen by this time, and my hands were perfectly useless—so much so that, when a large bird of the grouse species* flew up into a pine above my head, I was unable to cock my rifle to shoot at it. The mules were plunging into the snow at every step, and their packs were hanging under their bellies, but to attempt to adjust them was out of the question. It was nearly dark too, which made our situation anything but pleasant, and the mules were quite exhausted.

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* Called by the hunters le coq des bois (Scotch capercailzie).

At last, however, we reached the top and struck down the mountain at another point, but it was with the greatest toil and difficulty that we reached the bottom long after dark, and camped shortly after near the creek which wound through the valley, or rather in its very bed. One of the mules had slipped its pack completely under the belly, and, the girth pinching her, she started off just before reaching the creek at full gallop, kicking everything the pack contained to the four winds of heaven. This pack happened to contain all the provisions, and, as the search for them in the dark would have been useless, we this night had no supper. To shelter ourselves from the wind we camped in the bed of the creek, which was without water, but the wind howled down it as if it were a funnel, scattering our fire in every direction as soon as it was lighted, and tearing the blankets from our very bodies. The animals never moved from the spot where they had been unpacked; even if there had been grass, they were too exhausted to feed, but stood shivering in the wind, collapsed with cold, and almost dead. Such a night I never passed, and hope never to pass again. The hurricane never lulled for a single instant; all our efforts to build a fire were unavailing; and it was with no small delight that I hailed the break of day, when we immediately packed the mules and started on our journey.

The trail now led along the creek and through small broken prairies, with bluffs exhibiting a very curious formation of shale and sandstone. At one point the cañon opens out into a pretty open glade or park, in the middle of which is a large rock resembling a ruined castle: the little prairie is covered with fine grass, and a large herd of black-tailed deer were feeding in it. A little farther on we descried the timber on the Huerfano or Orphan Creek, so called from a remarkable isolated rock of sandstone which stands in a small prairie on its left bank, and is a well-known landmark to the Indians. We camped on the Huerfano under some high cotton-woods, the wind blowing with unabated violence. The next morning all the animals were missing, and, following their trail, we found them on the other side of the creek, five or six miles from the camp, in a little prairie full of buffalo-grass. As it was late in the day when we returned to camp, we did not leave till next morning, when we crossed on to the Cuernaverde or Greenhorn Creek.

On a bluff overlooking the stream I had the satisfaction of seeing two or three Indian lodges and one adobe hovel of a more aspiring order. As we crossed the creek a mountaineer on an active horse galloped up to us, his rifle over the horn of the saddle, and clad in hunting-shirt and pantaloons of deer-skin, with long fringes hanging down the arms and legs. As this was the first soul we had seen since leaving Red River, we were as delighted to meet a white man (and him an American) as he was to learn the news from the Mexican settlements. We found here two or three hunters, French Canadians, with their Assinnaboin and Sioux squaws, who have made the Greenhorn their head-quarters; and game being abundant and the rich soil of the valley affording them a sufficiency of Indian corn, they lead a tolerably easy life, and certainly a lazy one, with no cares whatever to annoy them. This valley will, I have no doubt, become one day a thriving settlement, the soil being exceedingly rich and admirably adapted to the growth of all kinds of grain. The prairies afford abundant pasture of excellent quality, and stock might be raised upon them in any numbers.

The depreciation in the value of beaver-skins has thrown the great body of trappers out of employment, and there is a general tendency amongst the mountain-men to settle in the fruitful valleys of the Rocky Mountains. Already the plough has turned up the soil within sight of Pike's Peak, and a hardy pioneer, an Englishman, has led the way to the Great Salt Lake, where a settlement of mountaineers has even now been formed, three thousand miles from the frontier of the United States.

From the Greenhorn an easy day's travel brought us to the banks of the San Carlos, which, receiving the former creek, falls into the Arkansa about two hundred and fifty miles from its source. The San Carlos is well timbered with cotton-wood, cherry, quaking-asp, box, alder, and many varieties of shrubs, and many spots in the valley are admirably adapted for cultivation, with a rich loamy soil, and so situated as to be irrigated with great facility from the creek. Irrigation is indispensable over the whole of this region, rain seldom falling in the spring and summer, which is one of the greatest drawbacks to the settlement of this country, the labour of irrigation being very great. The San Carlos heads in a lofty range of mountains about forty miles from its junction with the Arkansa. Near its upper waters is a circular valley enclosed by rugged highlands, through which the stream forces its way in a cañon whose precipitous sides overhang it to the height of three hundred feet. The face of the rock (of a dark limestone) is in many places perfectly vertical, and rises from the water's edge to a great elevation, piñons and small cedars growing out of crevices in the sides.

After leaving this creek we passed a barren rolling prairie with scanty herbage and covered with the palmilla* or soap-plant. A few antelope were its only tenants, and these so shy that I was unable to approach them. Fourteen miles from the San Carlos we struck the Arkansa at the little Indian trading-fort of the "Pueblo," which is situated on the left bank, a few hundred yards above the mouth of the Fontaine-qui-bouille, or Boiling Spring River, so called from two springs of mineral water near its head-waters under Pike's Peak, about sixty miles from its mouth. Here I was hospitably entertained in the lodge of one John Hawkens, an ex-trapper and well-known mountaineer. I turned my animals loose, and allowed them to seek for themselves the best pastures, as in the vicinity of the fort the prairies were perfectly bare of grass, and it was only near the mountain that any of a good quality was to be found.

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* The Palmilla or Soap-plant is a species of cactus, the fibrous root of which the New Mexicans use as a substitute for soap. An abundant lather is obtained from it.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Arkansa—The Pueblo Fort—Its Inhabitants—Hunting—Fontaine-qui-bouille—Arapahós—Cunning and Voracity of Wolves—Animals lost—A Snow-storm—Night in the Snow—Morning at last—Return to Arkansa—News from New Mexico—Fate of Two Mountain men—A daring Hunter—Turley's Defence—His Fate.

The Arkansa is here a clear, rapid river about a hundred yards in width. The bottom, which is enclosed on each side by high bluffs, is about a quarter of a mile across, and timbered with a heavy growth of cotton-wood, some of the trees being of great size. On each side vast rolling prairies stretch away for hundreds of miles, gradually ascending on the side towards the mountains, and the highlands are there sparsely covered with piñon and cedar. The high banks through which the river occasionally passes are of shale and sandstone, and rise precipitously from the water. Ascending the river the country is wild and broken until it enters the mountains, when the scenery is grand and imposing; but the prairies around it are arid and sterile, producing but little vegetation, and the grass, though of good quality, is thin and scarce. The Pueblo is a small square fort of adobe with circular bastions at the corners, no part of the walls being more than eight feet high, and round the inside of the yard or corral are built some half-dozen little rooms inhabited by as many Indian traders, *coureurs des bois*, and mountain-men. They live entirely upon game, and the greater part of the year without even bread, since but little maize is cultivated. As soon as their supply of meat is exhausted they start to the mountains with two or three pack-animals, and bring them back in two or three days loaded with buffalo or venison. In the immediate vicinity of the fort game is very scarce, and the buffalo have within a few years deserted the neighbouring prairies, but they are always found in the mountain-valleys, particularly in one called Bayou Salado, which abounds in every species of game, including elk, bears, deer, bighorn or Rocky Mountain sheep, buffalo, antelope, &c.

Hunting in the mountains round the head of Fontaine-qui-bouille and Bayou Salado I remained for the rest of the winter, which was unusually severe—so much so, that the hunters were not unfrequently afraid to venture with their animals into the mountains. Shortly after my arrival on Arkansa, and during a spell of fine sunny weather, I started with a Pueblo hunter for a load or two of buffalo-meat, intending to hunt on the waters of the Platte and the Bayou, where bulls remain in good condition during the winter months, feeding on the rich grass of the mountain-valleys. I took with me my horse and three pack-mules, as it was our intention to return with a good supply of meat.

Our course lay up the Fontaine-qui-bouille, and on the third day we entered the pine-covered uplands at the foot of the mountain. Here we found deer so abundant that we determined to hunt here, rather than proceed across the ridge on to the waters of the Platte. We camped on a little mountain-stream running into the creek an hour or two before sunset, and, as we had no provisions, we sallied out to hunt as soon as we had unpacked the mules. We killed two deer almost immediately, and, returning to camp, made a good supper off some of the tit-bits.

The next morning at daybreak, as soon as I had risen from my blanket, I saw a herd of deer feeding within a few hundred yards of camp, and seizing my rifle I immediately took advantage of some broken ground to approach them. Before, however, I could get within shot they ascended the bluffs and moved across a prairie, feeding as they went. I took a long circuit to get the wind of them, and, following a ravine, at length brought my rifle to bear, and knocked over a fine buck, the others running two or three hundred yards and then stopping to look round for their missing comrade. As I ran up to the dead one, and took out my knife to cut the throat, another deer ran past and stopped between me and the herd, and, taking a long shot, I dropped the animal, which, however, rose again and limped slowly away. Leaving the dead one and my ramrod on its body, I followed the wounded deer, and, about half a mile from where I fired, found it lying dead. The process of butchering occupied about twenty minutes, and, packing the hams and shoulders on my back, I trudged back to my first victim. As I was crossing a ravine and ascending the opposite bluff, I saw the figure of a man crawling along the bottom, evidently with the intention of approaching me. A close inspection assured me that it was an Indian; and as none but Arapahós were likely to be in the vicinity, and as these are the Indians most hostile to the white hunters, killing them whenever an opportunity offers, I made up my mind that a war-party was about, and that myself and companion stood a very good chance of "losing our hair." As the Indian cautiously advanced, I perceived another was running round the prairie to cut me off from camp, and consequently I determined to make good my ground where I was, throwing down the meat and getting my rifle in readiness for work.

The only tribes of Indians who frequent this part of the mountains are the Yutas (or Eutaws) and the Arapahós, who are hereditary enemies, and constantly at deadly war with each other. A large band of the Yutas had been wintering in the Bayou Salado, to which one trail leads by the Boiling Spring River (where I was hunting), and another by the Arkansa. The former is the trail followed by the Arapahó war-parties when on an expedition against the Yutas in the Bayou, and therefore I felt certain that none but the former Indians would be met with in this vicinity. However, as the Yutas are a very friendly tribe, I was loth to be the first to commence hostilities in case my antagonist might prove to belong to that nation, and therefore I awaited his approach, which he made stealthily, until he saw that I had discovered him, when, throwing himself erect, and gun in hand, he made directly towards me. With rifle cocked I watched his eye until he came within fifty yards, when suddenly, seeing my hostile appearance, he stopped, and, striking his hand thrice on his brawny chest, exclaimed, in a loud voice—

"Arapahó, Arapahó!" and stood erect and still. This announcement was very nearly being fatal to him, for, on hearing him proclaim himself one of that hostile nation, my rifle was up to my shoulder in an instant, and covering his heart. As my finger was on the trigger, it flashed across my mind that I had heard that two Arapahós were amongst the hunters on the Arkansa, their sister being married to a mountaineer, and that probably the dusky gentleman at the end of my rifle was one of these, as indeed he proved to be. I accordingly made signals of peace, and he approached and shook me by the hand. That his intentions were not altogether honest I have no doubt, but, finding me prepared, he thought it more advisable to remain "en paz." What strengthened me in this belief was the fact, which I shortly after discovered, that a war-party of his nation were at that moment camped within a few hundred yards of us, whose vicinity he never apprized me of, and who, if they had seen us, would not have hesitated an instant to secure our scalps and animals.

When I returned to the spot where I had left the first deer, not a particle was visible except some hair scattered on the ground, but a few hundred yards from the spot a dozen wolves were engaged in dining off a lump of something, which, on approach, I found to be the remains of my deer, leaving behind them, when dispersed, a handful of hair.

The sagacity of wolves is almost incredible. They will remain round a hunting-camp and follow the hunters the whole day, in bands of three and four, at less than a hundred yards' distance, stopping when they stop, and sitting down quietly when game is killed, rushing to devour the offal when the hunter retires, and then following until another feed is offered them. If a deer or antelope is wounded, they immediately pursue it, and not unfrequently pull the animal down in time for the hunter to come up and secure it from their ravenous clutches. However, they appear to know at once the nature of the wound, for if but slightly touched they never exert themselves to follow a deer, chasing those only which have received a mortal blow.

I one day killed an old buck which was so poor that I left the carcase on the ground untouched. Six coyotes, or small prairie wolves, were my attendants that day, and of course, before I had left the deer twenty paces, had commenced their work of destruction. Certainly not ten minutes after I looked back and saw the same six loping after me, one of them not twenty yards behind me, with his nose and face all besmeared with blood, and his belly swelled almost to bursting. Thinking it scarcely possible that they could have devoured the whole deer in so short a space, I had the curiosity to return, and, to my astonishment, found actually nothing left but a pile of bones and hair, the flesh being stripped from them as clean as if scraped with a knife. Half an hour after I killed a large black-tail deer, and, as it was also in miserable condition, I took merely the fleeces (as the meat on the back and ribs is called), leaving four-fifths of the animal untouched. I then retired a short distance, and, sitting down on a rock, lighted my pipe, and watched the operations of the wolves. They sat perfectly still until I had withdrawn some threescore yards, when they scampered, with a flourish of their tails, straight to the deer. Then commenced such a tugging and snarling and biting, all squeaking and swallowing at the same moment. A skirmish of tails and flying hair was seen for five minutes, when the last of them, with slouching tail and evidently ashamed of himself, withdrew, and nothing remained on the ground but a well-picked skeleton. By sunset, when I returned to camp, they had swallowed as much as three entire deer.

We remained hunting in the mountains some days, and left the Boiling Spring River with our mules loaded with meat, having, almost by a miracle, been unmolested by the Arapahó war-party, some of whom I saw hunting nearly every day, without being myself discovered. Nothing occurred on our return until the night of the second day, when we camped on the creek in a spot destitute of grass, and our animals took themselves off in search of food during the night, *where* we knew not.

The next morning my companion, thinking to find them close at hand, left me in camp cooking the breakfast while he went to bring in the animals, but presently returned, saying that he could find neither them nor their track, but had discovered fresh Indian sign in the bottom, where several Indians had been but a few hours before, and that, doubtless, they had made "*a raise.*" I instantly seized my rifle, and, taking a circuit round the camp, came presently upon the track of horses and mules, and struck at once after them, thinking that, of course, they were those made by our animals, as they tallied with the number, being two horses and three mules. I had followed up the track for ten miles, when, in crossing a piece of hard prairie which scarcely yielded to the impression of the hoofs, I, for the first time, observed that not one of the animals I was following was shod, and, knowing that most of my own were so, I began to think, and soon satisfied myself of the fact, that they were not those I was in search of. As soon as I had made up my mind to this I retraced my steps to camp, and immediately started again with my companion in another direction. This time we came upon the right track, and found that it took an easterly direction, and that the animals were not in the possession of the Indians, as their ropes still dragged along the ground, making a broad trail. Finding this, we returned to camp and "*cached*" our meat and packs in the forks of a cotton-wood tree, out of reach of wolves; and without thinking of cooking anything, so anxious were we to find our animals, we started off at once in pursuit, carrying a lariat and saddle-blanket to ride back on in case we found the mules. We followed the trail until midnight, by which time I felt not a little tired, as I had been on my legs since daybreak, and had not broken my fast since the preceding day. We therefore turned into the bottom, floundering through the bushes, and impaling ourselves at every step on the prickly pears which covered the ground, and made a fire near the stream, in a thicket which in some degree sheltered us from the cold. We had scarcely however lighted the fire when a gale of wind burst upon us, and, scattering the burning brands in every direction, quickly set fire to the dry grass and bushes to leeward of the fire. All our efforts to prevent this were unavailing, and we were necessitated to put out our fire to prevent the whole bottom from being burned. As the cold was intense, and I had no covering but a paltry saddle-blanket about four feet square, sleep was out of the question if I wished to keep unfrozen, so that, after an hour or two's rest and a good smoke, we again turned out, and by the light of the moon pursued the trail. As it passed over prairies entirely destitute of grass, the animals had never once stopped, but continued a straight course, without turning to the right or left, in search of pasture. We travelled on all night, and, halting for an hour's rest in the morning, about noon, looking ahead, I descried four objects feeding in the plain. I called out to my companion, who was a little in rear, that there they were.

"Elk," he answered, after a long look, "or Injuns. They 're no mules, I 'll lay a dollar: Arapahós, or I never see a redskin."

However, at that distance I recognised my mules, and, pushing on, I found them quietly feeding with Panchito, my companion's horse being alone missing, and they suffered me to catch them without difficulty. As we were now within twenty miles of the fort, Morgan, who had had enough of it, determined to return, and I agreed to go back with the animals to the *cache*, and bring in the meat and packs. I accordingly tied the blanket on a mule's back, and, leading the horse, trotted back at once to the grove of cotton-woods where we had before encamped. The sky had been gradually overcast with leaden-coloured clouds, until, when near sunset, it was one huge inky mass of rolling darkness: the wind had suddenly lulled, and an unnatural calm, which so surely heralds a storm in these tempestuous regions, succeeded. The ravens were winging their way towards the shelter of the timber, and the coyote was seen trotting quickly to cover, conscious of the coming storm.

The black threatening clouds seemed gradually to descend until they kissed the earth, and already the distant mountains were hidden to their very bases. A hollow murmuring swept through the bottom, but as yet not a branch was stirred by wind; and the huge cotton-woods, with their leafless limbs, loomed like a line of ghosts through the heavy gloom. Knowing but too well what was coming, I turned my animals towards the timber, which was about two miles distant. With pointed ears, and actually trembling with fright, they were as eager as myself to reach the shelter; but, before we had proceeded a third of the distance, with a deafening roar the tempest broke upon us. The clouds opened and drove right in our faces a storm of freezing sleet, which froze upon us as it fell. The first squall of wind carried away my cap, and the enormous hailstones, beating on my unprotected head and face, almost stunned me. In an instant my hunting-shirt was soaked, and as instantly frozen hard; and my horse was a mass of icicles. Jumping off my mule —for to ride was impossible—I tore off the saddle-blanket and covered my head. The animals, blinded with the sleet, and their eyes actually coated with ice, turned their sterns to the storm, and, blown before it, made for the open prairie. All my exertions to drive them to the shelter of the timber were useless. It was impossible to face the hurricane, which now brought with it clouds of driving snow; and perfect darkness soon set in. Still the animals kept on, and I determined not to leave them, following, or rather being blown, after them. My blanket, frozen stiff like a board, required all the strength of my numbed fingers to prevent it being blown away, and, although it was no protection against the intense cold, I knew it would in some degree shelter me at night from the snow. In half an hour the ground was covered on the bare prairie to the depth of two feet, and through this I floundered for a long time before the animals stopped. The prairie was as bare as a lake; but one little tuft of grease-wood bushes presented itself, and here, turning from the storm, they suddenly stopped and remained perfectly still. In vain I again attempted to turn them towards the direction of the timber; huddled together, they would not move an inch; and, exhausted myself, and seeing nothing before me but, as I thought, certain death, I sank down immediately behind them, and, covering my head with the blanket, crouched like a ball in the snow. I would have started myself for the timber, but it was pitchy dark, the wind drove clouds of frozen snow into my face, and the animals had so turned about in the prairie that it was impossible to know the direction to take; and although I had a compass with me, my hands were so frozen that I was perfectly unable, after repeated attempts, to unscrew the box and consult it. Even had I reached the timber, my situation would have been scarcely improved, for the trees were scattered wide about over a narrow space, and, consequently, afforded but little shelter; and if even I had succeeded in getting firewood—by no means an easy matter at any time, and still more difficult now that the ground was covered with three feet of snow—I was utterly unable to use my flint and steel to procure a light, since my fingers were like pieces of stone, and entirely without feeling.

The way the wind roared over the prairie that night—how the snow drove before it, covering me and the poor animals partly—and how I lay there, feeling the very blood freezing in my veins, and my bones petrifying with the icy blasts which seemed to penetrate them—how for hours I remained with my head on my knees, and the snow pressing it down like a weight of lead, expecting every instant to drop into a sleep from which I knew it was impossible I should ever awake—how every now and then the mules would groan aloud and fall down upon the snow, and then again struggle on their legs—how all night long the piercing howl of wolves was borne upon the wind, which never for an instant abated its violence during the night,—I would not attempt to describe. I have passed many nights alone in the wilderness, and in a solitary camp have listened to the roarings of the wind and the howling of wolves, and felt the rain or snow beating upon me, with perfect unconcern: but this night threw all my former experiences into the shade, and is marked with the blackest of stones in the memoranda of my journeyings.

Once, late in the night, by keeping my hands buried in the breast of my hunting-shirt, I succeeded in restoring sufficient feeling into them to enable me to strike a light. Luckily my pipe, which was made out of a huge piece of cotton-wood bark, and capable of containing at least twelve ordinary pipefuls, was filled with tobacco to the brim; and this I do believe kept me alive during the night, for I smoked and smoked until the pipe itself caught fire, and burned completely to the stem.

I was just sinking into a dreamy stupor, when the mules began to shake themselves, and sneeze and snort; which hailing as a good sign, and that they were still alive, I attempted to lift my head and take a view of the weather. When with great difficulty I raised my head, all appeared dark as pitch, and it did not at first occur to me that I was buried deep in snow; but when I thrust my arm above me, a hole was thus made, through which I saw the stars shining in the sky and the clouds fast clearing away. Making a sudden attempt to straighten my almost petrified back and limbs, I rose, but, unable to stand, fell forward in the snow, frightening the animals, which immediately started away. When I gained my legs I found that day was just breaking, a long grey line of light appearing over the belt of timber on the creek, and the clouds gradually rising from the east, and allowing the stars to peep from patches of blue sky. Following the animals as soon as I gained the use of my limbs, and taking a last look at the perfect cave from which I had just risen, I found them in the timber, and, singular enough, under the very tree where we had *cached* our meat. However, I was unable to ascend the tree in my present state, and my frost-bitten fingers refused to perform their offices; so that I jumped upon my horse, and, followed by the mules, galloped back to the

Arkansa, which I reached in the evening, half dead with hunger and cold.

The hunters had given me up for lost, as such a night even the "oldest inhabitant" had never witnessed. My late companion had reached the Arkansa, and was safely housed before it broke, blessing his lucky stars that he had not gone back with me. The next morning he returned and brought in the meat; while I spent two days in nursing my frozen fingers and feet, and making up, in feasting mountain fashion, for the banyans I had suffered.

The morning after my arrival on Arkansa, two men, named Harwood and Markhead—the latter one of the most daring and successful trappers that ever followed this adventurous mountain-life, and whom I had intended to have hired as a guide to the valley of the Columbia the ensuing spring—started off to the settlement of New Mexico, with some packs of peltries, intending to bring back Taos whisky (a very profitable article of trade amongst the mountain-men) and some bags of flour and Indian meal.

I found on returning from my hunt that a man named John Albert had brought intelligence that the New Mexicans and Pueblo Indians had risen in the valley of Taos, and, as I have before mentioned, massacred Governor Bent and other Americans, and had also attacked and destroyed Turley's ranch on the Arroyo Hondo, killing himself and most of his men. Albert had escaped from the house, and, charging through the assailants, made for the mountains, and, travelling night and day and without food, had reached the Greenhorn with the news, and after recruiting for a couple of days had come on to the Arkansa with the intelligence, which threw the fierce mountaineers into a perfect frenzy. As Markhead and Harwood would have arrived in the settlements about the time of the rising, little doubt remained as to their fate, but it was not until nearly two months after that any intelligence was brought concerning them. It seemed that they arrived at the Rio Colorado, the first New Mexican settlement, on the seventh or eighth day, when the people had just received news of the massacre in Taos. These savages, after stripping them of their goods, and securing, by treachery, their arms, made them mount their mules under the pretence of conducting them to Taos, there to be given up to the chief of the insurrection. They had hardly, however, left the village when a Mexican, riding behind Harwood, discharged his gun into his back: Harwood, calling to Markhead that he was "finished," fell dead to the ground. Markhead, seeing that his own fate was sealed, made no struggle, and was likewise shot in the back by several balls. They were then stripped and scalped and shockingly mutilated, and their bodies thrown into the bush by the side of the creek to be devoured by the wolves. They were both remarkably fine young men. Markhead was celebrated in the mountains for his courage and reckless daring, having had many almost miraculous escapes when in the very hands of hostile Indians. He had a few years ago accompanied Sir W. Drummond Stewart in one of his expeditions across the mountains. It happened that a half-breed of the company absconded one night with some animals belonging to Sir William, who, being annoyed at the circumstance, said hastily, and never dreaming that his offer would be taken up, that he would give five hundred dollars for the scalp of the thief. The next day Markhead rode into camp with the scalp of the unfortunate horse-thief hanging at the end of his rifle, and I believe received the reward, at least so he himself declared to me, for this act of mountain law. On one occasion, whilst trapping on the waters of the Yellow Stone, in the midst of the Blackfoot country, he came suddenly upon two or three lodges, from which the Indians happened to be absent. There was no doubt, from signs which he had previously discovered, that they were lying in wait for him somewhere on the stream to attack him when examining his traps, the Blackfeet, moreover, being most bitterly hostile to the white trappers, and killing them without mercy whenever an occasion offered. Notwithstanding the almost certainty that some of the Indians were close at hand, probably gone out for a supply of wood and would very soon return, Markhead resolved to visit the lodges and help himself to anything worth taking that he might find there. The fire was burning, and meat was actually cooking in a pot over it. To this he did ample justice, emptying the pot in a very satisfactory manner, after which he tied all the blankets, dressed skins, mocassins, &c., into a bundle, and, mounting his horse, got safely off with his prize.

It was not always, however, that he escaped scathless, for his body was riddled with balls received in many a bloody affray with Blackfeet and other Indians.

Laforey, the old Canadian trapper, with whom I stayed at Red River, was accused of having possessed himself of the property found on the two mountaineers, and afterwards of having instigated the Mexicans to the barbarous murder. The hunters on Arkansa vowed vengeance against him, and swore to have his hair some day, as well as similar love-locks from the people of Red River. A war-expedition was also talked of to that settlement, to avenge the murder of their comrades, and ease the Mexicans of their mules and horses.

The massacre of Turley and his people, and the destruction of his mill, were not consummated without considerable loss to the barbarous and cowardly assailants. There were in the house, at the time of the attack, eight white men, including Americans, French Canadians, and one or two Englishmen, with plenty of arms and ammunition. Turley had been warned of the intended insurrection, but had treated the report with indifference and neglect, until one morning a man named Otterbees, in the employ of Turley, and who had been despatched to Santa Fé with several mule-loads of whisky a few days before, made his appearance at the gate on horseback, and, hastily informing the inmates of the mill that the New Mexicans had risen and massacred Governor Bent and other Americans, galloped off. Even then Turley felt assured that he would not be molested, but, at the solicitations of his men, agreed to close the gate of the yard round which were the buildings of a mill and distillery, and make preparations for defence.

A few hours after a large crowd of Mexicans and Pueblo Indians made their appearance, all armed with guns and bows and arrows, and, advancing with a white flag, summoned Turley to surrender his house and the Americans in it, guaranteeing that his own life should be saved, but that every other American in the valley of Taos had to be destroyed; that the Governor and all the Americans at Fernandez and the rancho had been killed, and that not one was to be left alive in all New Mexico.

To this summons Turley answered that he would never surrender his house nor his men, and that, if they wanted it or them, "they must take them."

The enemy then drew off, and, after a short consultation, commenced the attack. The first day they numbered about five hundred, but the crowd was hourly augmented by the arrival of parties of Indians from the more distant pueblos, and of New Mexicans from Fernandez, La Cañada, and other places.

The building lay at the foot of a gradual slope in the sierra, which was covered with cedar-bushes. In front ran the stream of the Arroyo Hondo, about twenty yards from one side of the square, and on the other side was broken ground, which rose abruptly and formed the bank of the ravine. In rear, and behind the still-house, was some garden-ground enclosed by a small fence, and into which a small wicket-gate opened from the corral.

As soon as the attack was determined upon, the assailants broke, and, scattering, concealed themselves under the cover of the rocks and bushes which surrounded the house.

From these they kept up an incessant fire upon every exposed portion of the building where they saw the Americans preparing for defence.

They, on their parts, were not idle; not a man but was an old mountaineer, and each had his trusty rifle, with good store of ammunition. Wherever one of the assailants exposed a hand's-breadth of his person, there whistled a ball from an unerring barrel. The windows had been blockaded, loop-holes being left to fire through, and through these a lively fire was maintained. Already several of the enemy had bitten the dust, and parties were constantly seen bearing off the wounded up the banks of the Cañada. Darkness came on, and during the night a continual fire was kept up on the mill, whilst its defenders, reserving their ammunition, kept their posts with stern and silent determination. The night was spent in running balls, cutting patches, and completing the defences of the building. In the morning the fight was renewed, and it was found that the Mexicans had effected a lodgment in a part of the stables, which were separated from the other portions of the building, and between which was an open space of a few feet. The assailants, during the night, had sought to break down the wall, and thus enter the main building, but the strength of the adobes and logs of which it was composed resisted effectually all their attempts.

Those in the stable seemed anxious to regain the outside, for their position was unavailable as a means of annoyance to the besieged, and several had darted across the narrow space which divided it from the other part of the building, and which slightly projected, and behind which they were out of the line of fire. As soon, however, as the attention of the defenders was called to this point, the first man who attempted to cross, and who happened to be a Pueblo chief, was dropped on the instant, and fell dead in the centre of the intervening space. It appeared an object to recover the body, for an Indian immediately dashed out to the fallen chief, and attempted to drag him within the cover of the wall. The rifle which covered the spot again poured forth its deadly contents, and the Indian springing into the air, fell over the body of his chief, struck to the heart. Another and another met with a similar fate, and at last three rushed at once to the spot, and, seizing the body by the legs and head, had already lifted it from the ground, when three puffs of smoke blew from the barricaded window, followed by the sharp cracks of as many rifles, and the three daring Indians added their number to the pile of corses which now covered the body of the dead chief.

As yet the besieged had met with no casualties; but after the fall of the seven Indians, in the manner above described, the whole body of assailants, with a shout of rage, poured in a rattling volley, and two of the defenders of the mill fell mortally wounded. One, shot through the loins, suffered great agony, and was removed to the still-house, where he was laid upon a large pile of grain, as being the softest bed to be found.

In the middle of the day the assailants renewed the attack more fiercely than before, their baffled attempts adding to their furious rage. The little garrison bravely stood to the defence of the mill, never throwing away a shot, but firing coolly, and only when a fair mark was presented to their unerring aim. Their ammunition, however, was fast failing, and, to add to the danger of their situation, the enemy set fire to the mill, which blazed fiercely, and threatened destruction to the whole building. Twice they succeeded in overcoming the flames, and, taking advantage of their being thus occupied, the Mexicans and Indians charged into the corral, which was full of hogs and sheep, and vented their cowardly rage upon the animals, spearing and shooting all that came in their way. No sooner, however, were the flames extinguished in one place, than they broke out more fiercely in another; and as a successful defence was perfectly hopeless, and the numbers of the assailants increased every moment, a council of war was held by the survivors of the little garrison, when it was determined, as soon as night approached, that every one should attempt to escape as best he might, and in the mean time the defence of the mill was to be continued.

Just at dusk, Albert and another man ran to the wicket-gate which opened into a kind of enclosed space, and in which was a number of armed Mexicans. They both rushed out at the same moment, discharging their rifles full in the faces of the crowd. Albert, in the confusion, threw himself under the fence, whence he saw his companion shot down immediately, and heard his cries for mercy, mingled with shrieks of pain and anguish, as the cowards pierced him with knives and lances. Lying without motion under the fence, as soon as it was quite dark he crept over the logs and ran up the mountain, travelled day and night, and, scarcely stopping or resting, reached the Greenhorn, almost dead with hunger and fatigue. Turley himself succeeded in escaping from the mill and in reaching the mountain unseen. Here he met a Mexican, mounted on a horse, who had been a most intimate friend of the unfortunate man for many years. To this man Turley offered his watch (which was treble its worth) for the use of his horse, but was refused. The inhuman wretch, however, affected pity and commiseration for the fugitive, and advised him to go to a certain place, where he would bring or send him assistance; but on reaching the mill, which was now a mass of fire, he immediately informed the Mexicans of his place of concealment, whither a large party instantly proceeded and shot him to death.

Two others escaped and reached Santa Fé in safety. The mill and Turley's house were sacked and gutted, and all his hard-earned savings, which were considerable, and concealed in gold about the house, were discovered, and of course seized upon, by the victorious Mexicans.

The Indians, however, met a few days after with a severe retribution. The troops marched out of Santa Fé, attacked their pueblo, and levelled it to the ground, killing many hundreds of its defenders, and taking many prisoners, most of whom were hanged.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Beaver—Its Habits—Trappers—Dangers of Trapping—The Rendezvous—Gambling—War Party of Arapahós—Dangerous Neighbours—Mocassins—My Animals—Pasture—Breaking of Ice on the Arkansa—Fish—Boiling Spring River—Indians about—The Boiling Fountain—Soda-water—Delicious Draught.

Beaver has so depreciated in value within the last few years, that trapping has been almost abandoned; the price paid for the skin of this valuable animal having fallen from six and eight dollars per pound to one dollar, which hardly pays the expenses of traps, animals, and equipment for the hunt, and is certainly no adequate remuneration for the incredible hardships, toil, and danger, which are undergone by the hardy trappers in the course of their adventurous expeditions. The cause of the great decrease in value of beaver-fur is the substitute which has been found for it in the skins of the fur-seal and nutria—the improved preparation of other skins of little value, such as the hare and rabbit—and, more than all, in the use of silk in the manufacture of hats, which has in a great measure superseded that of beaver. Thus the curse of the trapper is levelled against all the new-fashioned materials of Paris hats; and the light and (h)airy gossamer of twelve-and-six is anathematized in the mountains in a way which would be highly distressing to the feelings of Messrs. Jupp and Johnson, and other artists in the ventilating-gossamer line.

Thanks to the innovation, however, a little breathing-time has been allowed the persecuted castor; and this valuable fur-bearing animal, which otherwise would, in the course of a few years, have become extinct, has now a chance of multiplying, and will in a short time again become abundant; for, although not a very prolific animal, the beaver has perhaps fewer natural enemies than any other of the *feræ naturæ*, and, being at the same time a wise and careful one, provides against all contingencies of cold and hunger, which in northern climates carry off so large a proportion of their brother beasts.

The beaver was once found in every part of North America from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, but has now gradually retired from the encroachments and the persecutions of civilized man, and is met with only in the far, far west, on the tributaries of the great rivers, and the streams which water the mountain-valleys in the great chain of the Rocky Mountains. On the waters of the Platte and Arkansa they are still numerous, and within the last two years have increased considerably in numbers; but the best trapping-ground now is on the streams running through the Bayou Salado, and the Old and New Parks, all of which are elevated mountain-valleys.

The habits of the beaver present quite a study to the naturalist, and they are certainly the most sagaciously instinctive of all quadrupeds. Their dams afford a lesson to the engineer, their houses a study to the architect of comfortable abodes, while their unremitting labour and indefatigable industry are models to be followed by the working-man. The lodge of the beaver is generally excavated in the bank of the stream, the entrance being invariably under water; but not unfrequently, where the banks are flat, they construct lodges in the stream itself, of a conical form, of limbs and branches of trees woven together and cemented with mud. For the purpose of forming dams, for the necessary timber for their lodges, or for the bark which they store for their winter's supply of food, the beaver often fells a tree eight or ten inches in diameter, throwing it, with the skill of an expert woodsman, in any direction he pleases, always selecting a tree above stream, in order that the logs may be carried down with it to their destination. The log is then chopped into small lengths, and, pushing them into the water, the beaver steers them to the lodge or dam. These trees are as cleanly cut as they could be by a sharp axe, the gouging furrows made by the animal's strong teeth cutting into the very centre of the trunk, the notch being smooth as sawed wood.

With his broad tail, which is twelve or fourteen inches long, and about four in breadth, and covered with a thick scaly skin, the beaver plasters his lodge, thus making it perform all the offices of a hand. They say that, when the beaver's tail becomes dry, the animal dies, but, whether this is the case or not, I have myself seen the beaver when at work return to the water and plunge his tail into the stream, and then resume his labour with renewed vigour; and I have also seen them, with their bodies on the bank, thumping the water with their tails with a most comical perseverance.

The female seldom produces more than three kittens at a birth, but I know an instance where one was killed with young, having no less than eleven in her. They live to a considerable age, and I once ate the tail of an old "man" beaver whose head was perfectly grey with age, and his beard was of the same venerable hue, notwithstanding which his tail was tender as a young racoon. The kittens are as playful as their namesakes of the feline race, and it is highly amusing to see an old one with grotesque gravity inciting her young to gambol about her, whilst she herself is engaged about some household work.

The *nutrias* of Mexico are identical with the beavers of the more northern parts of America; but in South America, and on some parts of the western coast of North America, a species of seal, or, as I have heard it described, a hybrid between the seal and the beaver, is called *nutria*—quite a distinct animal, however, from the Mexican *nutria*.

The trappers of the Rocky Mountains belong to a "genus" more approximating to the primitive savage than perhaps any other class of civilized man. Their lives being spent in the remote wilderness of the mountains, with no other companion than Nature herself, their habits and character assume a most singular cast of simplicity mingled with ferocity, appearing to take their colouring from the scenes and objects which surround them. Knowing no wants save those of nature, their sole care is to procure sufficient food to support life, and the necessary clothing to protect them from the rigorous climate. This, with the assistance of their trusty rifles, they are generally able to effect, but sometimes at the expense of great peril and hardship. When engaged in their avocation, the natural instinct of primitive man is ever alive, for the purpose of guarding against danger and the provision of necessary food.

Keen observers of nature, they rival the beasts of prey in discovering the haunts and habits of game, and in their skill and cunning in capturing it. Constantly exposed to perils of all kinds, they become callous to any feeling of danger, and destroy human as well as animal life with as little scruple and as freely as they expose their own. Of laws, human or divine, they neither know nor care to know. Their wish is their law, and to attain it they do not scruple as to ways and means Firm friends and bitter enemies, with them it is "a word and a blow," and the blow often first. They may have good qualities, but they are those of the animal; and people fond of giving hard names call them revengeful, bloodthirsty, drunkards (when the wherewithal is to be had), gamblers, regardless of the laws of *meum* and *tuum*—in fact, "White Indians." However, there are exceptions, and I *have* met honest mountain-men. Their animal qualities, however, are undeniable. Strong, active, hardy as bears, daring, expert in the use of their weapons, they are just what uncivilised white man might be supposed to be in a brute state, depending upon his instinct for the support of life. Not a hole or corner in the vast wilderness of the "Far West" but has been ransacked by these hardy men. From the Mississippi to the mouth of the Colorado of the West, from the frozen regions of the North to the Gila in Mexico, the beaver-hunter has set his traps in every creek and stream. All this vast country, but for the daring enterprise of these men, would be even now a *terra incognita* to geographers, as indeed a great portion still is; but there is not an acre that has not been passed and repassed by the trappers in their perilous excursions. The mountains and streams still retain the names assigned to them by the rude hunters; and these alone are the hardy pioneers who have paved the way for the settlement of the western country.

Trappers are of two kinds, the "hired hand" and the "free trapper:" the former hired for the hunt by the fur companies; the latter, supplied with animals and traps by the company, is paid a certain price for his furs and peltries.

There is also the trapper "on his own hook;" but this class is very small. He has his own animals and traps, hunts where he chooses, and sells his peltries to whom he pleases.

On starting for a hunt, the trapper fits himself out with the necessary equipment, either from the Indian trading-forts, or from some of the petty traders—coureurs des bois—who frequent the western country. This equipment consists usually of two or three horses or mules—one for saddle, the others for packs—and six traps, which are carried in a bag of leather called a *trap-sack.* Ammunition, a few pounds of tobacco, dressed deer-skins for mocassins, &c., are carried in a wallet of dressed buffalo-skin, called a possible-sack. His "possibles" and "trap-sack" are generally carried on the saddle-mule when hunting, the others being packed with the furs. The costume of the trapper is a hunting-shirt of dressed buckskin, ornamented with long fringes; pantaloons of the same material, and decorated with porcupine-quills and long fringes down the outside of the leg. A flexible felt hat and mocassins clothe his extremities. Over his left shoulder and under his right arm hang his powder-horn and bullet-pouch, in which he carries his balls, flint and steel, and odds and ends of all kinds. Round the waist is a belt, in which is stuck a large butcher-knife in a sheath of buffalo-hide, made fast to the belt by a chain or guard of steel; which also supports a little buckskin case containing a whetstone. A tomahawk is also often added; and, of course, a long heavy rifle is part and parcel of his equipment. I had nearly forgotten the pipe-holder, which hangs round his neck, and is generally a gage d'amour, and a triumph of squaw workmanship, in shape of a heart, garnished with beads and porcupine-quills.

Thus provided, and having determined the locality of his trapping-ground, he starts to the mountains, sometimes alone, sometimes with three or four in company, as soon as the breaking up of the ice allows him to commence operations. Arrived on his hunting-grounds, he follows the creeks and streams, keeping a sharp look-out for "sign." If he sees a prostrate cotton-wood tree, he examines it to discover if it be the work of beaver—whether "thrown" for the purpose of food, or to dam the stream. The track of the beaver on the mud or sand under the bank is also examined; and if the "sign" be fresh, he sets his trap in the run of the animal, hiding it under water, and attaching it by a stout chain to a picket driven in the bank, or to a bush or tree. A "float-stick" is made fast to the trap by a cord a few feet long, which, if the animal carry away the trap, floats on the water and points out its position. The trap is baited with the "medicine," an oily substance obtained from a gland in the scrotum of the beaver, but distinct from the testes. A stick is dipped into this and planted over the trap; and the beaver, attracted by the smell, and wishing a close inspection, very foolishly puts his leg into the trap, and is a "gone beaver."

When a lodge is discovered, the trap is set at the edge of the dam, at the point where the animal passes from deep to shoal water, and always under water. Early in the morning the hunter mounts his mule and examines the traps. The captured animals are skinned, and the tails, which are a great dainty, carefully packed into camp. The skin is then stretched over a hoop or framework of osier-twigs, and is allowed to dry, the flesh and fatty substance being carefully scraped (grained). When dry, it is folded into a square sheet, the fur turned inwards, and the bundle, containing about ten to twenty skins, tightly pressed and corded, and is ready for transportation.

During the hunt, regardless of Indian vicinity, the fearless trapper wanders far and near in search of "sign." His nerves must ever be in a state of tension, and his mind ever present at his call. His eagle eye sweeps round the country, and in an instant detects any foreign appearance. A turned leaf, a blade of grass pressed down, the uneasiness of the wild animals, the flight of birds, are all paragraphs to him written in nature's legible hand and plainest language. All the wits of the subtle savage are called into play to gain an advantage over the wily woodsman; but with the natural instinct of primitive man, the white hunter has the advantages of a civilised mind, and, thus provided, seldom fails to outwit, under equal advantages, the cunning savage.

Sometimes, following on his trail, the Indian watches him set his traps on a shrub-belted stream, and, passing up the bed, like Bruce of old, so that he may leave no track, he lies in wait in the bushes until the hunter comes to examine his carefully-set traps. Then, waiting until he approaches his ambushment within a few feet, whiz flies the home-drawn arrow, never failing at such close quarters to bring the victim to the ground. For one white scalp, however, that dangles in the smoke of an Indian's lodge, a dozen black ones, at the end of the hunt, ornament the camp-fires of the rendezvous.

At a certain time, when the hunt is over, or they have loaded their pack-animals, the trappers proceed to the "rendezvous," the locality of which has been previously agreed upon; and here the traders and agents of the fur companies await them, with such assortment of goods as their hardy customers may require, including generally a fair supply of alcohol. The trappers drop in singly and in small bands, bringing their packs of beaver to this mountain market, not unfrequently to the value of a thousand dollars each, the produce of one hunt. The dissipation of the "rendezvous," however, soon turns the trapper's pocket inside out. The goods brought by the traders, although of the most inferior quality, are sold at enormous prices:—Coffee, twenty and thirty shillings a pint-cup, which is the usual measure; tobacco fetches ten and fifteen shillings a plug; alcohol, from twenty to fifty shillings a pint; gunpowder, sixteen shillings a pint-cup; and all other articles at proportionably exorbitant prices.

The "beaver" is purchased at from two to eight dollars per pound; the Hudson's Bay Company alone buying it by the pluie, or "plew," that is, the whole skin, giving a certain price for skins, whether of old beaver or "kittens."

The rendezvous is one continued scene of drunkenness, gambling, and brawling and fighting, as long as the money and credit of the trappers last. Seated, Indian fashion, round the fires, with a blanket spread before them, groups are seen with their "decks" of cards, playing at "euker," "poker," and "seven-up," the regular mountain-games. The stakes are "beaver," which here is current coin; and when the fur is gone, their horses, mules, rifles, and shirts, hunting-packs, and *breeches*, are staked. Daring gamblers make the rounds of the camp, challenging each other to play for the trapper's highest stake,—his horse, his squaw (if he have one), and, as once happened, his scalp. There goes "hos and beaver!" is the mountain expression when any great loss is sustained; and, sooner or later, "hos and beaver" invariably find their way into the insatiable pockets of the traders. A trapper often squanders the produce of his hunt, amounting to hundreds of dollars, in a couple of hours; and, supplied on credit with another equipment, leaves the rendezvous for another expedition, which has the same result time after time; although one tolerably successful hunt would enable him to return to the settlements and civilised life, with an ample sum to purchase and stock a farm, and enjoy himself in ease and comfort the remainder of his days.

An old trapper, a French Canadian, assured me that he had received fifteen thousand dollars for beaver during a sojourn of twenty years in the mountains. Every year he resolved in his mind to return to Canada, and, with this object, always converted his fur into cash; but a fortnight at the "rendezvous" always cleaned him out, and, at the end of twenty years, he had not even credit sufficient to buy a pound of powder.

These annual gatherings are often the scene of bloody duels, for over their cups and cards no men are more quarrelsome than your mountaineers. Rifles, at twenty paces, settle all differences, and, as may be imagined, the fall of one or other of the combatants is certain, or, as sometimes happens, both fall to the word "fire."

A day or two after my return from the mountain, I was out in search of my animals along the river-bottom, when I met a war-party of Arapahós loping along on foot in Indian file. It was the same party who had been in the vicinity of our camp on Fontaine-qui-bouille, and was led by a chief called "*Coxo*," "the Game Leg." They were all painted and armed for war, carrying bows and well-filled quivers, war-clubs and lances, and some had guns in deerskin covers. They were all naked to the waist, a single buffalo robe being thrown over them, and from his belt each one had a lariat or rope of hide to secure the animals stolen in the expedition. They were returning without a scalp, having found the Yutas "not at home;" and this was considered a sign by the hunters that they would not be scrupulous in "raising some hair," if they caught a straggler far from camp. However, their present visit was for the purpose of procuring some meat, of which they stood in need, as to reach their village they had to cross a country destitute of game. They were all remarkably fine young men, and perfectly cleanly in their persons; indeed, when on the war-path, more than ordinary care is taken to adorn the body, and the process of painting occupies considerable time and attention. The Arapahós do not shave their heads, as do the Pawnees, Caws, and Osages, merely braiding the centre or scalp lock, and decorating it with a gay ribbon or feather of the war-eagle.

This war-party was twenty-one in number, the oldest, with the exception of the chief, being under thirty, and not one of them was less than five feet eight inches in height. In this they differ from their neighbours the Yutas and Comanches, who are of small stature; the latter especially, when off their horses, presenting small ungainly figures, with legs crooked by constant riding, and limbs exhibiting but little muscular development. Not one of this Arapahó band but could have sat as a model for an Apollo. During their stay the animals were all collected and corralled, as their penchant for horse-flesh, it was thought likely, might lead some of the young men to appropriate a horse or mule.

Each tribe of Prairie Indians has a different method of making mocassins, so that any one, acquainted with the various fashions, is at no loss to know the nation to which any particular one belongs whom he may happen to meet. The Arapahós and Cheyennes use a "shoe" mocassin, that is, one which reaches no higher than the instep, and wants the upper side-flaps which mocassins usually have. I always used Chippewa mocassins, which differ from those of the Prairie make, by the seam being made up the centre of the foot to the leg, and puckered into plaits. This, which is the true fashion of the "Forest Indian," who, by the by, is as distinct in character and appearance from him of the "plains" as a bear from a bluebottle, attracted the attention of the Arapahó warriors, and caused a lively discussion amongst themselves, owing to the novelty of the manufacture. They all surrounded me, and each examined and felt carefully the unusual chaussure.

"Ti-yah!" was the universal exclamation of astonishment. The old chief was the last to approach, and, after a minute examination, he drew himself up, and explained to them, as I perfectly understood by his gestures, "that the people who made those mocassins lived far, far away from the sun, where the snow lay deep on the ground, and where the night was illuminated by the mystery fire (the 'aurora borealis'), which he had seen, years ago, far to the north."

The vicinity of the "pueblo" affording no pasture, my cavallada had undertaken a voyage of discovery in search of grass, and had found a small valley up the bed of a dry creek, in which grew an abundance of bunch-grass. As, however, the river was fast frozen, they were unable to find a watering-place themselves, and one day made their appearance in camp, evidently for the purpose of being conducted to water: I therefore led them to the river and broke a large hole, which they invariably resorted to every morning and evening at the same hour, although it was three or four miles from their feeding-place. This enabled me to catch them whenever I required, for at a certain time I had only to go to this hole, and I never failed to see them approaching leisurely, the mules following the horse in Indian file, and always along the same trail which they had made in the snow.

The grass, although to all appearance perfectly withered, still retained considerable nourishment, and the mules improved fast in flesh. Panchito, however, fell off in condition as the others improved, more, I think, from the severity of the winter than the scarcity of grass. When they had cleared the valley they sought a pasture still farther off, and, after losing sight of them for fifteen days, I found them fifteen miles from the river, at the foot of the mountain, in a prairie in which was a pool of water (which prevented their having recourse to the water-hole I had made for them), and where was plenty of buffalo-grass.

It was now always a day's work for me to catch my hunting-mule, and the animals were becoming so wild that I often returned without effecting the capture at all, my only chance being to chase them on horseback and lasso the horse, when they all followed as quiet as lambs, never caring to forsake their old companion.

The weather in January, February, and March was exceedingly severe; storms of sleet and snow, invariably accompanied by hurricanes of wind, were of daily occurrence, but the snow rarely remained more than thirty hours on the ground, an hour or two of the meridian sun being sufficient to cause it to disappear. On the 17th of March the ice in the Arkansa "moved" for the first time, and the next day it was entirely broken up, and the arrival of spring-weather was confidently expected. However, it froze once more in a few days as firm as ever, and the weather became colder than before, with heavy snow-storms and hard gales of wind. After this succeeded a spell of fine weather, and about the 24th the ice moved bodily away, and the river was clear from that date, the edges of the water only being frozen in the morning. Geese now made their appearance in considerable numbers, and afforded an agreeable variety to our perpetual venison and tough bull-meat, as well as good sport in shooting them with rifles. The "blue bird" followed the goose; and when the first robin was seen, the hunters pronounced the winter at an end.

When the river was clear of ice I tried my luck with the fish, and in ten minutes pulled out as many trout, hickory shad, and suckers, but from that time never succeeded in getting a nibble. The hunters accounted for this by saying that the fish migrate up the stream as soon as the ice breaks, seeking the deep holes and bends of its upper waters, and that my first piscatory attempt was in the very nick of time, when a shoal was passing up for the first time after the thaw.

Towards the latter end of March I removed my animals from their pasture, which was getting dry and rotten, and took them up Fontaine-qui-bouille into the mountains, where the grass is of better quality and more abundant. On the Arkansa and the neighbouring prairies not a vestige of spring vegetation yet presented itself, but nearer the mountains the grass was beginning to shoot. It is a curious fact that the young blade of the buffalo and bunch grass pierces its way through the old one, which completely envelops and protects the tender blade from the nipping frosts of spring, and thus also the weakening effects of feeding on the young grass are rendered less injurious to horses and mules, since they are obliged to eat the old together with the young shoots.

The farther I advanced up the creek, and the nearer the mountains, the more forward was the vegetation, although even here in its earliest stage. The bunch-grass was getting green at the roots, and the absinthe and grease-wood were throwing out their buds. As yet, however, the cotton-woods and the larger trees in the bottom showed no signs of leaf, and the currant and cherry bushes still looked dry and sapless. The thickets, however, were filled with birds, and resounded with their songs, and the plains were alive with prairie-dogs, busy in repairing their houses and barking lustily as I rode through their towns. Turkeys, too, were calling in the timber, and the boom of the prairie-fowl, at rise and set of sun, was heard on every side. The snow had entirely disappeared from the plains, but Pike's Peak and the mountains were still clad in white; the latter, being sometimes clear of snow and looking dark and sombre, would for an hour or two be hidden by a curtain of clouds, which rising displayed the mountains, before black and furrowed, now white and smooth with their snowy mantle.

On my way I met a band of hunters who had been driven in by a war-party of Arapahós, who were encamped on the eastern fork of the Fontaine-qui-bouille. They strongly urged me to return, as, being alone, I could not fail to be robbed of my animals, if not killed myself. However, in pursuance of my fixed rule, never to stop on account of Indians, I proceeded up the river, and about fifty miles from the mouth encamped on the first fork, where was an abundance of deer and antelope. In the timber on the banks of the creek I erected a little shanty, covering it with the bark of the prostrate trees which strewed the ground, and picketing my animals at night in a little prairie within sight, where they luxuriated on plenty of buffalo-grass. Here I remained for a day or two hunting in the mountain, leaving my cavallada to take care of themselves, and at the mercy of the Arapahós should they discover them. At night I returned to camp, made a fire, and cooked an appola of antelope-meat, and enjoyed my solitary pipe after supper with as much relish as if I was in a divan, and lay down on my blanket, serenaded by packs of hungry wolves, and sleeping as soundly as if there were no such people in existence as Arapahós, merely waking now and then and raising my hand to the top of my head, to assure myself that my top-knot was in its place.

The next day I moved up the main fork, on which I had been directed by the hunters to proceed, in order to visit the far-famed springs from which the creek takes its name. The valley of the upper waters is very picturesque: many mountain-streams course through it, a narrow line of timber skirting their banks. On the western side the rugged mountains frown overhead, and rugged cañons filled with pine and cedar gape into the plain. At the head of the valley, the ground is much broken up into gullies and ravines where it enters the mountain-spurs, with topes of pine and cedar scattered here and there, and masses of rock tossed about in wild confusion. On entering the broken ground the creek turns more to the westward, and passes by two remarkable *buttes*[*] of a red conglomerate, which appear at a distance like tablets cut in the mountain-side. The eastern fork skirts the base of the range, coming from the ridge called "The Divide," which separates the waters of the Platte and Arkansa; and between the main stream and this branch, running north and south, is a limestone ledge which forms the western wall of the lateral valley running at right angles from that of the Fontaine-qui-bouille. The uplands are clothed with cedar and dwarf oak, the bottoms of the river with cotton-wood, quaking-asp, oak, ash, and box-alder, and a thick undergrowth of cherry and currant bushes.

I followed a very good lodge pole-trail, which struck the creek before entering the broken ground, being that used by the Yutas and Arapahós on their way to the Bayou Salado. Here the valley narrowed considerably, and, turning an angle with the creek, I was at once shut in by mountains and elevated ridges, which rose on each side the stream. This was now a rapid torrent, tumbling over rocks and stones, and fringed with oak and a shrubbery of brush. A few miles on, the cañon opened out into a little shelving glade; and on the right bank of the stream, and raised several feet above it, was a flat white rock in which was a round hole, where one of the celebrated springs hissed and bubbled with its escaping gas. I had been cautioned against drinking this, being directed to follow the stream a few yards to another, which is the true soda-spring.

Before doing this, however, I unpacked the mule and took the saddle from Panchito, piling my saddle and meat on the rock. The animals, as soon as I left them free, smelt the white rock, and instantly commenced licking and scraping with their teeth with the greatest eagerness. At last the horse approached the spring, and, burying his nose deep in the clear water, drank greedily. The mules appeared at first to fear the bubbling of the gas, and smelt and retreated two or three times before they mustered courage to take a draught; but when they had once tasted the water I thought they would have burst themselves.

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[*] Any prominent rock or bluff is called a *butte* (pronounced biute) by the hunters and trappers.

For hours they paid no attention to the grass, continuing to lick the rock and constantly returning to the spring to drink. For myself, I had not only abstained from drinking that day, but, with the aid of a handful of salt which I had brought with me for the purpose, had so highly seasoned my breakfast of venison, that I was in a most satisfactory state of thirst. I therefore at once proceeded to the other spring, and found it about forty yards from the first, but immediately above the river, issuing from a little basin in the flat white rock, and trickling over the edge into the stream. The escape of gas in this was much stronger than in the other, and was similar to water boiling smartly.

I had provided myself with a tin cup holding about a pint; but, before dipping it in, I divested myself of my pouch and belt, and sat down in order to enjoy the draught at my leisure. I was half dead with thirst; and, tucking up the sleeves of my hunting-shirt, I dipped the cup into the midst of the bubbles, and raised it hissing and sparkling to my lips. Such a draught! Three times, without drawing a breath, was it replenished and emptied, almost blowing up the roof of my mouth with its effervescence. It was equal to the very best soda-water, but possesses that fresh, natural flavour, which manufactured water cannot impart.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The "Medicine" Spring—Superstition of Arapahós—Offerings to the Water God—Legend of the Boiling Fountain—A Hunter's Paradise—Daybreak in the Mountains—Hunting—Bears—Disagreeable Surprise—Mountain on Fire—Touch and Go—Run before it—Fire and Water—Camp on Fontaine-qui-bouille—Fire follows—Green Grass—Audacity of Wolves.

The Indians regard with awe the "medicine" waters of these fountains, as being the abode of a spirit who breathes through the transparent water, and thus, by his exhalations, causes the perturbation of its surface. The Arapahós, especially, attribute to this water-god the power of ordaining the success or miscarriage of their war-expeditions; and as their braves pass often by the mysterious springs, when in search of their hereditary enemies the Yutas, in the "Valley of Salt," they never fail to bestow their votive offerings upon the water-sprite, in order to propitiate the "Manitou" of the fountain, and ensure a fortunate issue to their "path of war."

Thus at the time of my visit the basin of the spring was filled with beads and wampum, and pieces of red cloth and knives, whilst the surrounding trees were hung with strips of deerskin, cloth, and mocassins, to which, had they been serviceable, I would most sacrilegiously have helped myself. The "sign," too, round the spring, plainly showed that here a war-dance had been executed by the braves; and I was not a little pleased to find that they had already been here, and were not likely to return the same way; but in this supposition I was quite astray.

This country was once possessed by the Shos-shone or Snake Indians, of whom the Comanches of the plains are a branch; and although many hundred miles now divide their hunting-grounds, they were once, if not the same people, tribes of the same grand nation. They still, however, retain a common language; and there is great analogy in many of their religious rites and legendary tales, which proves that at least a very close alliance must at one period have bound the two tribes together. They are even now the two most powerful nations, in point of numbers, of all the tribes of western Indians; the Comanche ruling supreme on the eastern plains, as the Shos-shones are the dominant power in the country west of the Rocky Mountains, and in the mountains themselves. A branch of the latter is the tribe of Tlamath Indians, the most warlike of the western tribes; as also the Yutas, who may be said to connect them with the nation of Comanche.

Numerically, the Snakes are supposed to be the most powerful of any Indian nation in existence.

The Snakes, who, in common with all Indians, possess hereditary legends to account for all natural phenomena, or any extraordinary occurrences which are beyond their ken or comprehension, have of course their legendary version of the causes which created, in the midst of their hunting-grounds, these two springs of sweet and bitter water; which are also intimately connected with the cause of separation between the tribes of "Comanche" and the "Snake." Thus runs the legend:—

Many hundreds of winters ago, when the cotton-woods on the Big River were no higher than an arrow, and the red men, who hunted the buffalo on the plains, all spoke the same language, and the pipe of peace breathed its social cloud of kinnik-kinnek whenever two parties of hunters met on the boundless plains—when, with hunting-grounds and game of every kind in the greatest abundance, no nation dug up the hatchet with another because one of its hunters followed the game into their bounds, but, on the contrary, loaded for him his back with choice and fattest meat, and ever proffered the soothing pipe before the stranger, with well-filled belly, left the village,—it happened that two hunters of different nations met one day on a small rivulet, where both had repaired to quench their thirst. A little stream of water, rising from a spring on a rock within a few feet of the bank, trickled over it, and fell splashing into the river. To this the hunters repaired; and whilst one sought the spring itself, where the water, cold and clear, reflected on its surface the image of the surrounding scenery, the other, tired by his exertions in the chase, threw himself at once to the ground, and plunged his face into the running stream.

The latter had been unsuccessful in the chase, and perhaps his bad fortune, and the sight of the fat deer which the other hunter threw from his back before he drank at the crystal spring, caused a feeling of jealousy and ill-humour to take possession of his mind. The other, on the contrary, before he satisfied his thirst, raised in the hollow of his hand a portion of the water, and, lifting it towards the sun, reversed his hand, and allowed it to fall upon the ground,—a libation to the Great Spirit who had vouchsafed him a successful hunt, and the blessing of the refreshing water with which he was about to quench his thirst.

Seeing this, and being reminded that he had neglected the usual offering, only increased the feeling of envy and annoyance which the unsuccessful hunter permitted to get the mastery of his heart; and the Evil Spirit at that moment entering his body, his temper fairly flew away, and he sought some pretence by which to provoke a quarrel with the stranger Indian at the spring.

"Why does a stranger," he asked, rising from the stream at the same time, "drink at the spring-head, when one to whom the fountain belongs contents himself with the water that runs from it?"

"The Great Spirit places the cool water at the spring," answered the other hunter, "that his children may drink it pure and undefiled. The running water is for the beasts which scour the plains. Au-sa-qua is a chief of the Shos-shone: he drinks at the head-water."

"The Shos-shone is but a tribe of the Comanche," returned the other: "Waco-mish leads the grand nation. Why does a Shos-shone dare to drink above him?"

"He has said it. The Shos-shone drinks at the spring-head; other nations of the stream which runs into the fields. Au-sa-qua is chief of his nation. The Comanche are brothers. Let them both drink of the same water."

"The Shos-shone pays tribute to the Comanche. Waco-mish leads that nation to war. Waco-mish is chief of the Shos-shone, as he is of his own people."

"Waco-mish lies; his tongue is forked like the rattlesnake's; his heart is black as the Misho-tunga (bad spirit). When the Manitou made his children, whether Shos-shone or Comanche, Arapahó, Shi-an, or Pā-né, he gave them buffalo to eat, and the pure water of the fountain to quench their thirst. He said not to one, Drink here, and to another, Drink there; but gave the crystal spring to all, that all might drink."

Waco-mish almost burst with rage as the other spoke; but his coward heart alone prevented him from provoking an encounter with the calm Shos-shone. *He*, made thirsty by the words he had spoken—for the red man is ever sparing of his tongue—again stooped down to the spring to quench his thirst, when the subtle warrior of the Comanche suddenly threw himself upon the kneeling hunter, and, forcing his head into the bubbling water, held him down with all his strength, until his victim no longer struggled, his stiffened limbs relaxed, and he fell forward over the spring, drowned and dead.

Over the body stood the murderer, and no sooner was the deed of blood consummated than bitter remorse took possession of his mind, where before had reigned the fiercest passion and vindictive hate. With hands clasped to his forehead, he stood transfixed with horror, intently gazing on his victim, whose head still remained immersed in the fountain. Mechanically he dragged the body a few paces from the water, which, as soon as the head of the dead Indian was withdrawn, the Comanche saw suddenly and strangely disturbed. Bubbles sprang up from the bottom, and, rising to the surface, escaped in hissing gas. A thin vapoury cloud arose, and, gradually dissolving, displayed to the eyes of the trembling murderer the figure of an aged Indian, whose long snowy hair and venerable beard, blown aside by a gentle air from his breast, discovered the well-known totem of the great Wan-kan-aga, the father of the Comanche and Shos-shone nation, whom the tradition of the tribe, handed down by skilful hieroglyphics, almost deified for the good actions and deeds of bravery this famous warrior had performed when on earth.

Stretching out a war-club towards the affrighted murderer, the figure thus addressed him :—

"Accursed of my tribe! this day thou hast severed the link between the mightiest nations of the world, while the blood of the brave Shos-shone cries to the Manitou for vengeance. May the water of thy tribe be rank and bitter in their throats!" Thus saying, and swinging his ponderous war-club (made from the elk's horn) round his head, he dashed out the brains of the Comanche, who fell headlong into the spring, which, from that day to the present moment, remains rank and nauseous, so that not even when half dead with thirst, can one drink the foul water of that spring.

The good Wan-kan-aga, however, to perpetuate the memory of the Shos-shone warrior, who was renowned in his tribe for valour and nobleness of heart, struck with the same avenging club a hard flat rock, which overhung the rivulet, just out of sight of this scene of blood; and forthwith the rock opened into a round clear basin, which instantly filled with bubbling sparkling water, than which no thirsty hunter ever drank a sweeter or a cooler draught.

Thus the two springs remain, an everlasting memento of the foul murder of the brave Shos-shone, and the stern justice of the good Wan-kan-aga; and from that day the two mighty tribes of the Shos-shone and Comanche have remained severed and apart; although a long and bloody war followed the treacherous murder of the Shos-shone chief, and many a scalp torn from the head of the Comanche paid the penalty of his death.

The American and Canadian trappers assert that the numerous springs which, under the head of Beer, Soda, Steam-boat springs, &c., abound in the Rocky Mountains, are the spots where his satanic majesty comes up from his kitchen to breathe the sweet fresh air, which must doubtless be refreshing to his worship after a few hours spent in superintending the culinary process going on below.

Never was there such a paradise for hunters as this lone and solitary spot. The shelving prairie, at the bottom of which the springs are situated, is entirely surrounded by rugged mountains, and, containing perhaps two or three acres of excellent grass, affords a safe pasture to their animals, which would hardly care to wander from such feeding and the salitrose rocks they love so well to lick. Immediately overhead Pike's Peak, at an elevation of 12,000 feet above the level of the sea, towers high into the clouds; whilst from the fountain, like a granitic amphitheatre, ridge after ridge, clothed with pine and cedar, rises and meets the stupendous mass of mountains, well called "Rocky," which stretches far away north and southward, their gigantic peaks being visible above the strata of clouds which hide their rugged bases.

This first day the sun shone out bright and warm, and not a breath of wind ruffled the evergreen foliage of the cedar-groves. Gay-plumaged birds were twittering in the shrubs, and ravens and magpies were chattering overhead, attracted by the meat I had hung upon a tree; the mules, having quickly filled themselves, were lying round the spring, basking lazily in the sun; and myself, seated on a pack, and pipe in mouth, with rifle ready at my side, indolently enjoyed the rays which, reverberated from the white rock on which I was lying, were deliciously warm and soothing. A piece of rock, detached from the mountain-side and tumbling noisily down, caused me to look up in the direction whence it came. Half a dozen big-horns, or Rocky Mountain sheep, perched on the pinnacle of a rock, were gazing wonderingly upon the prairie, where the mules were rolling enveloped in clouds of dust. The enormous horns of the mountain sheep appeared so disproportionably heavy, that I every moment expected to see them lose their balance and topple over the giddy height. My motions frightened them, and, jumping from rock to rock, they quickly disappeared up the steepest part of the mountain. At the same moment a herd of black-tail deer crossed the corner of the glade within rifle-shot of me, but, fearing the vicinity of Indians, I refrained from firing before I had reconnoitred the vicinity for signs of their recent presence.

Immediately over me, on the left bank of the stream, and high above the springs, was a small plateau, one of many which are seen on the mountain-sides. Three buffalo-bulls were here quietly feeding, and remained the whole afternoon undisturbed. I saw from the sign that they had very recently drunk at the springs, and that the little prairie where my animals were feeding was a frequent resort of solitary bulls.

Perceiving that the game, which was in sight on every side of me, was unwarily tame, I judged from this fact that no Indians were in the immediate vicinity, and therefore I resolved to camp where I was. Ascending a bluff where had been an old Indian camp, I found a number of old lodge-poles, and packed them down to the springs, near which I made my fire, but out of arrow-shot of the shrubbery which lines the stream. Instead of permitting the animals to run loose, I picketed them close to and round the camp, in order that they might act as sentinels during the night, for no man or dog can so soon discover the presence or approach of an Indian as a mule. The organ and sense of smelling in these animals are so acute that they at once detect the scent peculiar to the natives, and, snorting loud with fear, and by turning their heads with ears pointed to the spot whence the danger is approaching, wake, and warn at the same moment, their sleeping masters of the impending peril.

However, this night I was undisturbed, and slept soundly until the chattering of a magpie overhead awoke me, just as Pike's Peak was being tinged with the first grey streak of dawn.

Daybreak in this wild spot was beautiful in the extreme. While the deep gorge in which I lay was still buried in perfect gloom, the mountain-tops loomed grey and indistinct from out the morning mist. A faint glow of light broke over the ridge which shut out the valley from the east, and, spreading over the sky, first displayed the snow-covered peak, a wreath of vapoury mist encircling it, which gradually rose and disappeared. Suddenly the dull white of its summit glowed with light like burnished silver; and at the same moment the whole eastern sky blazed, as it were, in gold, and ridge and peak, catching the refulgence, glittered with the beams of the rising sun, which at length, peeping over the crest, flooded at once the valley with its dazzling light.

Blowing the ashes of the slumbering fire, I placed upon it the little pot containing a piece of venison for my breakfast, and, relieving my four-footed sentries from their picket-guard, sallied down to the stream, the edges of which were still thickly crusted with ice, for the purpose of taking a luxuriously-cold bath; and cold enough it was in all conscience. After my frugal breakfast, unseasoned by bread or salt, or by any other beverage than the refreshing soda-water, I took my rifle and sallied up the mountain to hunt, consigning my faithful animals to the protection of the Dryad of the fountain, offering to that potent sprite the never-failing "medicine" of the first whiff of my pipe before starting from the spot.

Climbing up the mountain-side, I reached a level plateau, interspersed with clumps of pine and cedar, where a herd of black-tail deer were quietly feeding. As I had the "wind" I approached under cover of a cedar whose branches feathered to the ground, and, resting my rifle in a forked limb, I selected the plumpest-looking of the band, a young buck, and "let him have it," as the hunters say. Struck through the heart, the deer for an instant stretched out its limbs convulsively, and then bounded away with the band, but in a zig-zag course; and unlike the rest, whose tails were lifted high, his black tufted appendage was fast "shut up." Whilst I, certain of his speedy fall, reloaded my rifle, the band, seeing their comrade staggering behind, suddenly stopped. The wounded animal with outstretched neck ran round and round for a few seconds in a giddy circle, and dropped dead within sixty yards of where I stood. The others, like sheep, walked slowly up to the dead animal, and again my rifle gave out its sharp crack from the screen of branches, and another of the band, jumping high in air, bit the dust. They were both miserably poor, so much so that I left all but the hind quarters and fleece, and hanging them upon a tree I returned to camp for a mule to pack in the meat.

The mountains are full of grizzly bears, but, whether they had not yet left their winter-quarters thus early in the season, I saw but one or two tracks, one of which I followed unsuccessfully for many miles over the wildest part of the mountains, into the Bayou Salado. Whilst intent upon the trail, a clattering as of a regiment of cavalry immediately behind me made me bring my rifle to the ready, thinking that a whole nation of mounted Indians were upon me; but, looking back, a band of upwards of a hundred elk were dashing past, looking like a herd of mules, and in their passage down the mountain carrying with them a perfect avalanche of rocks and stones. I killed another deer on my return close to camp, which I reached, packing in the meat on my back, long after dark, and found the animals, which received me with loud neighs of recognition and welcome, with well-filled bellies, taking their evening drink at the springs.

I spent here a very pleasant time, and my animals began soon to improve upon the mountain-grass. Game was very abundant; indeed, I had far more meat than I possibly reqnired; but the surplus I hung up to jerk, as now the sun was getting powerful enough for that process.

I explored all the valleys and cañons of the mountains, and even meditated an expedition to the summit of Pike's Peak, where mortal foot has never yet trod. No dread of Indians crossed my mind, probably because I had remained so long unmolested; and I was so perfectly contented that I had even selected a camping-ground where I intended to remain two or three months, and probably should be at the present moment, if I had not got into a "scrape."

The bears latterly began to move, and their tracks became more frequent. One day I was hunting just at the foot of the Peak, when a large she-bear jumped out of a patch of cedars where she had been lying, and with a loud grunt charged up the mountain, and, dodging amongst the rocks, prevented my getting a crack at her. She was very old, and the grizzliest of the grizzly. She was within a few feet of me when I first saw her. It was unluckily nearly dark, or I should have followed and probably killed her, for they seldom run far, particularly at this season, when they are lank and weak.

One day as I was following a band of deer over the broken ground to the eastward of the mountain, I came suddenly upon an Indian camp, with the fire still smouldering, and dried meat hanging on the trees. Robinson Crusoe could not have been more thoroughly disgusted at sight of the "footprint in the sand," than was I at this inopportune discovery. I had anticipated a month or two's undisturbed hunting in this remote spot, and now it was out of the question to imagine that the Indians would leave me unmolested. I presently saw two Indians, carrying a deer between them, emerge from the timber bordering the creek, whom I knew at once by their dress to be Arapahós. As, however, my camp was several miles distant, I still hoped that they had not yet discovered its locality, and continued my hunt that day, returning late in the evening to my solitary encampment.

The next morning I removed the animals and packs to a prairie a little lower down the stream, which, although nearer the Indian camp, was almost hidden from view; being enclosed by pine-ridges and ragged buttes, and entered by a narrow gap filled with a dense growth of brush. When I had placed them in security, and taken the precaution to fasten them all to strong picket-pins, with a sufficient length of rope to enable them to feed at ease, and at the same time prevent them straying back to the springs, I again sallied out to hunt. A little before sunrise I descended the mountain to the springs, and, being very tired, after taking a refreshing draught of the cold water, I lay down on the rock by the side of the water and fell fast asleep. When I awoke the sun had already set; but although darkness was fast gathering over the mountain, I was surprised to see a bright light flickering against its sides. A glance assured me that the mountain was on fire, and, starting up, I saw at once the danger of my position. The bottom had been fired about a mile below the springs, and but a short distance from where I had secured my animals. A dense cloud of smoke was hanging over the gorge, and presently, a light air springing up from the east, a mass of flame shot up into the sky and rolled fiercely up the stream, the belt of dry brush on its banks catching fire and burning like tinder. The mountain was already invaded by the devouring element, and two wings of flame spread out from the main stream, which roaring along the bottom with the speed of a racehorse, licked the mountain-side, extending its long line as it advanced. The dry pines and cedars hissed and cracked, as the flame, reaching them, ran up their trunks, and spread amongst the limbs, whilst the long waving grass underneath was a sea of fire. From the rapidity with which the fire advanced I feared that it would already have reached my animals, and hurried at once to the spot as fast as I could run. The prairie itself was as yet untouched, but the surrounding ridges were clothed in fire, and the mules, with stretched ropes, were trembling with fear. Throwing the saddle on my horse, and the pack on the steadiest mule, I quickly mounted, leaving on the ground a pile of meat, which I had not time to carry with me. The fire had already gained the prairie, and its long, dry grass was soon a sheet of flame, but, worse than all, the gap through which I had to retreat was burning. Setting spurs into Panchito's sides, I dashed him at the burning bush, and, though his mane and tail were singed in the attempt, he gallantly charged through it. Looking back, I saw the mules huddled together on the other side, and evidently fearing to pass the blazing barrier. As, however, to stop would have been fatal, I dashed on, but before I had proceeded twenty yards my old hunting mule, singed and smoking, was at my side, and the others close behind her.

On all sides I was surrounded by fire. The whole scenery was illuminated, the peaks and distant ridges being as plainly visible as at noonday. The bottom was a roaring mass of flame, but on the other side, the prairie being more bare of cedar-bushes, the fire was less fierce and presented the only way of escape. To reach it, however, the creek had to be crossed, and the bushes on the banks were burning fiercely, which rendered it no easy matter; moreover, the edges were coated above the water with thick ice, which rendered it still more difficult. I succeeded in pushing Panchito into the stream, but, in attempting to climb the opposite bank, a blaze of fire was puffed into his face, which caused him to rear on end, and, his hind feet flying away from him at the same moment on the ice, he fell backwards into the middle of the stream, and rolled over me in the deepest water. Panchito rose on his legs and stood trembling with affright in the middle of the stream, whilst I dived and groped for my rifle, which had slipped from my hands, and of course sunk to the bottom. After a search of some minutes I found it, and, again mounting, made another attempt to cross a little farther down, in which I succeeded, and, followed by the mules, dashed through the fire and got safely through the line of blazing brush.

Once in safety, I turned in my saddle and had leisure to survey the magnificent spectacle. The fire had extended at least three miles on each side the stream, and the mountain was one sheet of flame. A comparatively thin line marked the progress of the devouring element, which, as there was no wind to direct its course, burned on all sides, actually roaring as it went.

I had from the first no doubt but that the fire was caused by the Indians, who had probably discovered my animals, but, thinking that a large party of hunters might be out, had taken advantage of a favourable wind to set fire to the bottom, hoping to secure the horse and mules in the confusion, without the risk of attacking the camp. Once or twice I felt sure that I saw dark figures running about near where I had seen the Indian camp the previous day, and just as I had charged through the gap I heard a loud yell, which was answered by another at a little distance.

Singularly enough, just as I had got through the blazing line, a breeze sprang up from the westward and drove the fire after me, and I had again to beat a hasty retreat before it.*

I encamped six or seven miles from the springs, and, whilst proceeding down the creek, deer and antelope continually crossed and recrossed the trail, some in their affright running back into the very jaws of the fire. As soon as I had secured the animals I endeavoured to get my rifle into shooting order, but the water had so thoroughly penetrated and swelled the patching round the balls, that it was a long time before I succeeded in cleaning one barrel, the other defying all my attempts. This was a serious accident, as I could not but anticipate a visit from the Indians if they discovered the camp.

All this time the fire was spreading out into the prairies, and, creeping up the "divide," was already advancing upon me. It extended at least five miles on the left bank of the creek, and on the right was more slowly creeping up the mountain-side; while the brush and timber in the bottom was one body of flame. Besides the long sweeping line of the advancing flame, the plateaus on the mountain-side, and within the line, were burning in every direction, as the squalls and eddies down the gullies drove the fire to all points.

The mountains themselves being invisible, the air, from the low ground where I then was, appeared a mass of fire, and huge crescents of flame danced as it were in the very sky, until a mass of timber blazing at once exhibited the sombre background of the stupendous mountains.

I had scarcely slept an hour when huge clouds of smoke rolling down the bottom frightened the animals, whose loud hinnying awoke me, and, half suffocated by the dense smoke which hung heavily in the atmosphere, I again retreated before the fire, which was rapidly advancing: and this time I did not stop until I had placed thirty or forty miles between me and the enemy. I then encamped in a thickly-timbered bottom on the Fontaine-qui-bouille, where the ground, which had been burned by the hunters in the winter, was studded like a wheat-field with green grass. On this the animals fared sumptuously for several days—better, indeed, than I did myself, for game was very scarce, and in such poor condition as to be almost uneatable. While encamped on this stream, the wolves infested the camp to that degree, that I could scarcely leave my saddles for a few minutes on the ground without finding the straps of raw hide gnawed to pieces; and one night the hungry brutes ate up all the ropes which were tied on the necks of the animals and trailed along the ground: they were actually devoured to within a yard of the mules' throats. One evening a wolf came into camp as I was engaged cleaning my rifle, one barrel of which was still unserviceable, and a long hickory wiping-stick in it at the time. As I was hidden by a tree, the wolf approached the fire within a few feet, and was soon tugging away at an apishamore or saddle-cloth of buffalo calfskin which lay on the ground. Without dreaming that the rifle would go off, I put a cap on the useless barrel, and, holding it out across my knee in a line with the wolf, snap—ph-i-zz—bang—went the charge of damp powder, much to my astonishment, igniting the stick which remained in the barrel, and driving it like a fiery comet against the ribs of the beast, who, yelling with pain, darted into the prairie at the top of his speed, his singed hair smoking as he ran.

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* This fire extended into the prairie, towards the waters of the Platte, upwards of forty miles, and for fourteen days its glare was visible on the Arkansa, fifty miles distant.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Buffalo—Their Disappearance from former Range—Their Meat—Canadians Feasting—Buffalo Hunting—Tenacity of Life in Buffalo—Death of a Bull—Thickness of Scalp-hair—Destruction of Buffalo.

It is a singular fact that within the last two years the prairies, extending from the mountains to a hundred miles or more down the Arkansa, have been entirely abandoned by the buffalo. Indeed, in crossing from the settlements of New Mexico, the boundary of their former range is marked by skulls and bones, which appear fresher as the traveller advances westward and towards the waters of the Platte. As the skulls are said to last only three years on the surface of the ground, that period has consequently seen the gradual disappearance of the buffalo from their former haunts.

With the exception of the Bayou Salado, one of their favourite pastures, they are now rarely met with in large bands on the upper waters of the Arkansa; but straggling bulls pass occasionally the foot of the mountain, seeking wintering-places on the elevated plateaus, which are generally more free from snow than the lowland prairies, by reason of the high winds. The bulls separate from the cows about the month of September, and scatter over the prairies and into the mountains, where they recruit themselves during the winter. A few males, however, always accompany the cows, to act as guides and defenders of the herd, on the outskirts of which they are always stationed. The countless bands which are seen together at all seasons are generally composed of cows alone; the bulls congregating in smaller herds, and on the flanks of the main body.

The meat of the cow is infinitely preferable to that of the male buffalo; but that of the bull, particularly if killed in the mountains, is in better condition during the winter months. From the end of June to September bull-meat is rank and tough, and almost uneatable; while the cows are in perfection, and as fat as stall-fed oxen, the "dépouillé" or fleece exhibiting frequently four inches and more of solid fat.

Whether it is that the meat itself (which, by the way, is certainly the most delicious of flesh) is most easy of digestion, or whether the digestive organs of hunters are "ostrichified" by the severity of exercise, and the bracing, wholesome climate of the mountains and plains, it is a fact that most prodigious quantities of "fat cow" may be swallowed with the greatest impunity, and not the slightest inconvenience ever follows the mammoth feasts of the gourmands of the far west. The powers of the Canadian voyageurs and hunters in the consumption of meat strike the greenhorn with wonder and astonishment; and are only equalled by the gastronomical capabilities exhibited by Indian dogs, both following the same plan in their epicurean gorgings.

On slaughtering a fat cow, the hunter carefully lays by, as a tit-bit for himself, the "boudins" and medullary intestine, which are prepared by being inverted and partially cleaned (this, however, is not thought indispensable). The dépouillé or fleece, the short and delicious hump-rib and "tender loin," are then carefully stowed away, and with these the rough edge of the appetite is removed. But *the* course is, *par excellence*, the sundry yards of "boudin," which, lightly browned over the embers of the fire, slide down the well-lubricated throat of the hungry mountaineer, yard after yard disappearing in quick succession.

I once saw two Canadians* commence at either end of such a coil of grease, the mass lying between them on a dirty apishamore like the coil of a huge snake. As yard after yard glided glibly down their throats, and the serpent on the saddle-cloth was dwindling from an anaconda to a moderate-sized rattlesnake, it became a great point with each of the feasters to hurry his operation, so as to gain a march upon his neighbour, and improve the opportunity by swallowing more than his just proportion; each, at the same time, exhorting the other, whatever he did, to feed fair, and every now and then, overcome by the unblushing attempts of his partner to bolt a vigorous mouthful, would suddenly jerk back his head, drawing out at the same moment, by the retreating motion, several yards of boudin from his neighbour's mouth and stomach (for the greasy viand required no mastication, and was bolted whole), and, snapping up himself the ravished portions, greedily swallowed them; to be in turn again withdrawn and subjected to a similar process by the other.

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* The majority of the trappers and mountain-hunters are French Canadians and Saint-Louis French Creoles.

No animal requires so much killing as a buffalo. Unless shot through the lungs or spine, they invariably escape; and, even when thus mortally wounded, or even struck through the very heart, they will frequently run a considerable distance before falling to the ground, particularly if they see the hunter after the wound is given. If, however, he keeps himself concealed after firing, the animal will remain still, if it does not immediately fall. It is a most painful sight to witness the dying struggles of the huge beast. The buffalo invariably evinces the greatest repugnance to lie down when mortally wounded, apparently conscious that, when once touching mother earth, there is no hope left him. A bull, shot through the heart or lungs, with blood streaming from his mouth, and protruding tongue, his eyes rolling, bloodshot, and glazed with death, braces himself on his legs, swaying from side to side, stamps impatiently at his growing weakness, or lifts his rugged and matted head and helplessly bellows out his conscious impotence. To the last, however, he endeavours to stand upright, and plants his limbs farther apart, but to no purpose. As the body rolls like a ship at sea, his head slowly turns from side to side, looking about, as it were, for the unseen and treacherous enemy who has brought him, the lord of the plains, to such a pass. Gouts of purple blood spurt from his mouth and nostrils, and gradually the failing limbs refuse longer to support the ponderous carcase; more heavily rolls the body from side to side, until suddenly, for a brief instant, it becomes rigid and still; a convulsive tremor seizes it, and, with a low, sobbing gasp, the huge animal falls over on his side, the limbs extended stark and stiff, and the mountain of flesh without life or motion.

The first attempts of a "greenhorn" to kill a buffalo are invariably unsuccessful. He sees before him a mass of flesh, nearly five feet in depth from the top of the hump to the brisket, and consequently imagines that, by planting his ball midway between these points, it must surely reach the vitals. Nothing, however, is more erroneous than the impression; for to "throw a buffalo in his tracks," which is the phrase for making a clean shot, he must be struck but a few inches above the brisket, behind the shoulder, where alone, unless the spine be divided, a death-shot will reach the vitals. I once shot a bull, the ball passing directly through the very centre of the heart and tearing a hole sufficiently large to insert the finger, which ran upwards of half a mile before it fell, and yet the ball had passed completely through the animal, cutting its heart almost in two. I also saw eighteen shots, the half of them muskets, deliberately fired into an old bull, at six paces, and some of them passing through the body, the poor animal standing the whole time, and making feeble attempts to charge. The nineteenth shot, with the muzzle touching his body, brought him to the ground. The head of the buffalo-bull is so thickly covered with coarse matted hair, that a ball fired at half a dozen paces will not penetrate the skull through the shaggy frontlock. I have frequently attempted this with a rifle carrying twenty-five balls to the pound, but never once succeeded.

Notwithstanding the great and wanton destruction of the buffalo, many years must elapse before this lordly animal becomes extinct. In spite of their numerous enemies, they still exist in countless numbers, and, could any steps be taken to protect them, as is done in respect of other game, they would ever remain the life and ornament of the boundless prairies, and afford ample and never-failing provision to the travellers over these otherwise desert plains. Some idea of the prodigious slaughter of these animals may be formed, by mentioning the fact that upwards of one hundred thousand buffalo robes find their way annually into the United States and Canada; and these are the skins of *cows* alone, the bull's hide being so thick that it is never dressed. Besides this, the Indians kill a certain number for their own use, exclusive of those whose meat they require; and the reckless slaughter of buffalo by parties of white men, emigrants to the Columbia, California, and elsewhere, leaving, as they proceed on their journey, thousands of untouched carcases on the trail, swells the aggregate of this wholesale destruction to an enormous amount.

CHAPTER XXX.

Grizzly Bears—Their Ferocity—John Glass's Scrape—The Dead Alive—Rube Herring and the Lost Trap—Trapping a B'ar—Bear and Squaws—The Bighorn—Killing a Sheep—Pets—Elk—Antelope—The Carcagieu—Mountain Wolves—Solitary Hunter—Mountain Camp.

THE grizzly bear is the fiercest of the feræ naturæ of the mountains. His great strength and wonderful tenacity of life render an encounter with him anything but desirable, and therefore it is a rule with the Indians and white hunters never to attack him unless backed by a strong party. Although, like every other wild animal, he usually flees from man, yet at certain seasons, when maddened by love or hunger, he not unfrequently charges at first sight of a foe; when, unless killed dead, a hug at close quarters is anything but a pleasant embrace, his strong hooked claws stripping the flesh from the bones as easily as a cook peels an onion. Many are the tales of bloody encounters with these animals which the trappers delight to recount to the "greenhorn," to enforce their caution as to the fool-hardiness of ever attacking the grizzly bear.

Some years ago a trapping party was on their way to the mountains, led, I believe, by old Sublette, a well-known captain of the West. Amongst the band was one John Glass, a trapper who had been all his life in the mountains, and had seen, probably, more exciting adventures, and had had more wonderful and hairbreadth escapes, than any of the rough and hardy fellows who make the West their home, and whose lives are spent in a succession of perils and privations. On one of the streams running from the "Black Hills," a range of mountains northward of the Platte, Glass and a companion were one day setting their traps, when, on passing through a cherry-thicket which skirted the stream, the former, who was in advance, descried a large grizzly bear quietly turning up the turf with his nose, searching for yampa-roots or pig-nuts, which there abounded. Glass immediately called his companion, and both, proceeding cautiously, crept to the skirt of the thicket, and, taking steady aim at the animal, whose broadside was fairly exposed at the distance of twenty yards, discharged their rifles at the same instant, both balls taking effect, but not inflicting a mortal wound. The bear, giving a groan of pain, jumped with all four legs from the ground, and, seeing the wreaths of smoke hanging at the edge of the brush, charged at once in that direction, snorting with pain and fury.

"Hurraw, Bill!" roared out Glass, as he saw the animal rushing towards them, "we 'll be made 'meat' of as sure as shootin' !" and, leaving the tree behind which he had concealed himself, he bolted through the thicket, followed closely by his companion. The brush was so thick, that they could scarcely make their way through, whereas the weight and strength of the bear carried him through all obstructions, and he was soon close upon them.

About a hundred yards from the thicket was a steep bluff, and between these points was a level piece of prairie; Glass saw that his only chance was to reach this bluff, and, shouting to his companion to make for it, they both broke from the cover and flew like lightning across the open space. When more than half way across, the bear being about fifty yards behind them, Glass, who was leading, tripped over a stone, and fell to the ground, and just as he rose to his feet, the beast, rising on his hind feet, confronted him. As he closed, Glass, never losing his presence of mind, cried to his companion to load up quickly, and discharged his pistol full into the body of the animal, at the same moment that the bear, with blood streaming from its nose and mouth, knocked the pistol from his hand with one blow of its paw, and, fixing its claws deep into his flesh, rolled with him to the ground.

The hunter, notwithstanding his hopeless situation, struggled manfully, drawing his knife and plunging it several times into the body of the beast, which, furious with pain, tore with tooth and claw the body of the wretched victim, actually baring the ribs of flesh, and exposing the very bones. Weak with loss of blood, and with eyes blinded with the blood which streamed from his lacerated scalp, the knife at length fell from his hand, and Glass sank down insensible, and to all appearance dead.

His companion, who, up to this moment, had watched the conflict, which, however, lasted but a few seconds, thinking that his turn would come next, and not having had presence of mind even to load his rifle, fled with might and main back to camp, where he narrated the miserable fate of poor Glass. The captain of the band of trappers, however, despatched the man with a companion back to the spot where he lay, with instructions to remain by him if still alive, or to bury him if, as all supposed he was, defunct, promising them at the same time a sum of money for so doing.

On reaching the spot, which was red with blood, they found Glass still breathing, and the bear, dead and stiff, actually lying upon his body. Poor Glass presented a horrifying spectacle: the flesh was torn in strips from his chest and limbs, and large flaps strewed the ground; his scalp hung bleeding over his face, which was also lacerated in a shocking manner.

The bear, besides the three bullets which had pierced its body, bore the marks of the fierce nature of Glass's final struggle, no less than twenty gaping wounds in the breast and belly testifying to the gallant defence of the mountaineer.

Imagining that, if not already dead, the poor fellow could not possibly survive more than a few moments, the men collected his arms, stripped him even of his hunting-shirt and mocassins, and, merely pulling the dead bear off the body, mounted their horses, and slowly followed the remainder of the party, saying, when they reached it, that Glass was dead, as probably they thought, and that they had buried him.

In a few days the gloom which pervaded the trappers' camp, occasioned by the loss of a favourite companion, disappeared, and Glass's misfortune, although frequently mentioned over the camp-fire, at length was almost entirely forgotten in the excitement of the hunt and Indian perils which surrounded them.

Months elapsed, the hunt was over, and the party of trappers were on their way to the trading-fort with their packs of beaver. It was nearly sundown, and the round adobe bastions of the mud-built fort were just in sight, when a horseman was seen slowly approaching them along the banks of the river. When near enough to discern his figure, they saw a lank cadaverous form with a face so scarred and disfigured that scarcely a feature was discernible. Approaching the leading horsemen, one of whom happened to be the companion of the defunct Glass in his memorable bear scrape, the stranger, in a hollow voice, reining in his horse before them, exclaimed, "Hurraw, Bill, my boy! you thought I was 'gone under' that time, did you? but hand me over my horse and gun, my lad; I ain't dead yet by a dam sight!"

What was the astonishment of the whole party, and the genuine horror of Bill and his worthy companion in the burial story, to hear the well-known, though now much altered, voice of John Glass, who had been killed by a grizzly bear months before, and comfortably interred, as the two men had reported, and all had believed!

There he was, however, and no mistake about it; and all crowded round to hear from his lips, how, after the lapse of he knew not how long, he had gradually recovered, and being without arms, or even a butcher-knife, he had fed upon the almost putrid carcase of the bear for several days, until he had regained sufficient strength to crawl, when, tearing off as much of the bear's-meat as he could carry in his enfeebled state, he crept down the river; and suffering excessive torture from his wounds, and hunger, and cold, he made the best of his way to the fort, which was some eighty or ninety miles from the place of his encounter with the bear, and, living the greater part of the way upon roots and berries, he after many, many days, arrived in a pitiable state, from which he had now recovered, and was, to use his own expression, "as slick as a peeled onion."

A trapper on Arkansa, named Valentine Herring, but better known as "Old Rube," told me that once, when visiting his traps one morning on a stream beyond the mountains, he found one missing, at the same time that he discovered fresh bear "sign" about the banks. Proceeding down the river in search of the lost trap, he heard the noise of some large body breaking through the thicket of plum-bushes which belted the stream. Ensconcing himself behind a rock, he presently observed a huge grizzly bear emerge from the bush and limp on three legs to a flat rock, which he mounted, and then, quietly seating himself, he raised one of his fore paws, on which Rube, to his amazement, discovered his trap tight and fast.

The bear, lifting his iron-gloved foot close to his face, gravely became sensible of a peculiar odour which was wafted right into my face by the breeze, and which, on snuffing it once or twice, I immediately recognised as that which emanates from sheep and goats. Still I never thought that one of the former animals could be in the neighbourhood, for my mule was picketed on the little plateau where I sat, and was leisurely cropping the buffalo-grass which thickly covered it.

Looking up carelessly from my work, as a whiff stronger than before reached my nose, what was my astonishment at seeing five mountain-sheep within ten paces, and regarding me with a curious and astonished gaze! Without drawing a breath, I put out my hand and grasped the rifle, which was lying within reach; but the motion, slight as it was, sufficed to alarm them, and with a loud bleat the old ram bounded up the mountain, followed by the band, and at so rapid a pace that all my attempts to "draw a bead" upon them were ineffectual. When, however, they reached a little plateau about one hundred and fifty yards from where I stood, they suddenly stopped, and, approaching the edge, looked down at me, shaking their heads, and bleating their displeasure at the intrusion. No sooner did I see them stop than my rifle was at my shoulder, and covering the broadside of the one nearest to me. An instant after and I pulled the trigger, and at the report the sheep jumped convulsively from the rock, and made one attempt to follow its flying companions; but its strength failed, and, circling round once or twice at the edge of the plateau, it fell over on its side, and, rolling down the steep rock, tumbled dead very near me. My prize proved a very fine young male, but had not a large pair of horns. It was, however, "seal" fat, and afforded me a choice supply of meat, which was certainly the best I had eaten in the mountains, being fat and juicy, and in flavour somewhat partaking both of the domestic sheep and buffalo.

Several attempts have been made to secure the young of these animals and transport them to the States; and, for this purpose, an old mountaineer, one Billy Williams, took with him a troop of milch-goats, by which to bring up the young sheep; but although he managed to take several fine lambs, I believe that he did not succeed in reaching the frontier with one living specimen out of some half-score. The hunters frequently rear them in the mountains; and they become greatly attached to their masters, enlivening the camp with their merry gambols.

The elk, in point of size, ranks next to the buffalo. It is found in all parts of the mountains, and descends not unfrequently far down into the plains in the vicinity of the larger streams. A full-grown elk is as large as a mule, with rather a heavy neck and body, and stout limbs, its feet leaving a track as large as that of a two-year-old steer. They are dull, sluggish animals, at least in comparison with others of the deer tribe, and are easily approached and killed. In winter they congregate in large herds, often numbering several hundreds; and at that season are fond of travelling, their track through the snow having the appearance of a broad beaten road. The elk requires less killing than any other of the deer tribe (whose tenacity of life is remarkable); a shot anywhere in the fore part of the animal brings it to the ground. On one occasion I killed two with one ball, which passed through the neck of the first, and struck the second, which was standing a few paces distant, through the heart: both fell dead. A deer, on the contrary, often runs a considerable distance, strike it where you will. The meat of the elk is strong flavoured, and more like "poor bull" than venison: it is only eatable when the animal is fat and in good condition; at other times it is strong tasted and stringy.

The antelope, the smallest of the deer tribe, affords the hunter a sweet and nutritious meat, when that of nearly every other description of game, from the poorness and scarcity of the grass during the winter, is barely eatable. They are seldom seen now in very large bands on the grand prairies, having been driven from their old pastures by the Indians and white hunters. The former, by means of "surrounds," an enclosed space formed in one of the passes used by these animals, very often drive into the toils an entire band of antelope of several hundreds, when not one escapes slaughter.

I have seen them on the western sides of the mountains, and in the mountain valleys, in herds of several thousands. They are exceedingly timid animals, but at the same time wonderfully curious; and their curiosity very often proves their death, for the hunter, taking advantage of this weakness, plants his wiping-stick in the ground, with a cap or red handkerchief on the point, and, concealing himself in the long grass, waits, rifle in hand, the approach of the inquisitive antelope, who, seeing an unusual object in the plain, trots up to it, and, coming within range of the deadly tube, pays dearly for his temerity. An antelope, when alone, is one of the stupidest of beasts, and becomes so confused and frightened at sight of a travelling party, that it frequently runs right into the midst of the danger it seeks to avoid.

I had heard most wonderful accounts from the trappers of an animal, the existence of which was beyond all doubt, which, although exceedingly rare, was occasionally met with in the mountains, but, from its supposed dangerous ferocity, and the fact of its being a cross between the devil and a bear, was never molested by the Indians or white hunters, and a wide berth given whenever the animal made its dreaded appearance. Most wonderful stories were told of its audacity and fearlessness; how it sometimes jumps from an overhanging rock on a deer or buffalo, and, fastening on its neck, soon brings it to the ground; how it has been known to leap upon a hunter when passing near its place of concealment, and devour him in a twinkling—often charging furiously into a camp, and playing all sorts of pranks on the goods and chattels of the mountaineers. The general belief was that the animal owes its paternity to the old gentleman himself; but the most reasonable declare it to be a cross between the bear and wolf.

Hunting one day with an old Canadian trapper, he told me that, in a part of the mountains which we were about to visit on the morrow, he once had a battle with a "carcagieu," which lasted upwards of two hours, during which he fired a pouchful of balls into the animal's body, which spat them out as fast as they were shot in. To the truth of this probable story he called all the saints to bear witness.

Two days after, as we were toiling up a steep ridge after a band of mountain-sheep, my companion, who was in advance, suddenly threw himself flat behind a rock, and exclaimed in a smothered tone, signalling me with his hand to keep down and conceal myself, "Sacré enfant de Gârce, mais here's von dam carcagieu!"

I immediately cocked my rifle, and, advancing to the rock, and peeping over it, saw an animal, about the size of a large badger, engaged in scraping up the earth about a dozen paces from where we were concealed. Its colour was dark, almost black; its body long, and apparently tailless; and I at once recognised the mysterious beast to be a "glutton." After I had sufficiently examined the animal, I raised my rifle to shoot, when a louder than common "Enfant de Gârce" from my companion alarmed the animal, and it immediately ran off, when I stood up and fired both barrels after it, but without effect; the attempt exciting a derisive laugh from the Canadian, who exclaimed, "Pe gar, may be you got fifty balls; vel, shoot 'em all at de dam carcagieu, and he not care a dam!"

The skins of these animals are considered "great medicine" by the Indians, and will fetch almost any price. They are very rarely met with on the plains, preferring the upland valleys and broken ground of the mountains, which afford them a better field for their method of securing game, which is by lying in wait behind a rock, or on the steep bank of a ravine, concealed by a tree or shrub, until a deer or antelope passes underneath, when they spring upon the animal's back, and, holding on with their strong and sharp claws, which they bury in the flesh, soon bring it bleeding to the ground. The Indians say they are purely carnivorous; but I imagine that, like the bear, they not unfrequently eat fruit and roots, when animal food is not to be had.

I have said that the mountain wolves, and, still more so, the coyote of the plains, are less frightened at the sight of man than any other beast. One night, when encamped on an affluent of the Platte, a heavy snow-storm falling at the time, I lay down in my blanket, after first heaping on the fire a vast pile of wood, to burn till morning. In the middle of the night I was awakened by the excessive cold, and, turning towards the fire, which was burning bright and cheerfully, what was my astonishment to see a large grey wolf sitting quietly before it, his eyes closed, and his head nodding in sheer drowsiness! Although I had frequently seen wolves evince their disregard to fires, by coming within a few feet of them to seize upon any scraps of meat which might be left exposed, I had never seen or heard of one approaching so close as to warm his body, and for that purpose alone. However, I looked at him for some moments without disturbing the beast, and closed my eyes and went to sleep, leaving him to the quiet enjoyment of the blaze.

This is not very wonderful when I mention that it is a very common thing for these animals to gnaw the straps of a saddle on which your head is reposing for a pillow.

When I turned my horse's head from Pike's Peak I quite regretted the abandonment of my mountain life, solitary as it was, and more than once thought of again taking the trail to the Bayou Salado, where I had enjoyed such good sport.

Apart from the feeling of loneliness which any one in my situation must naturally have experienced, surrounded by stupendous works of nature, which in all their solitary grandeur frowned upon me, and sinking into utter insignificance the miserable mortal who crept beneath their shadow; still there was something inexpressibly exhilarating in the sensation of positive freedom from all worldly care, and a consequent expansion of the sinews, as it were, of mind and body, which made me feel elastic as a ball of Indian rubber, and in a state of such perfect *insouciance* that no more dread of scalping Indians entered my mind than if I had been sitting in Broadway, in one of the windows of Astor House. A citizen of the world, I never found any difficulty in investing my resting-place, wherever it might be, with all the attributes of a home; and hailed, with delight equal to that which the artificial comforts of a civilized home would have caused, the, to me, domestic appearance of my hobbled animals, as they grazed around the camp, when I returned after a hard day's hunt. By the way, I may here remark that my *sporting* feeling underwent a great change when I was necessitated to follow and kill game for the support of life, and as a means of subsistence; and the slaughter of deer and buffalo no longer became *sport* when the object was to fill the larder, and the excitement of the hunt was occasioned by the alternative of a plentiful feast or a banyan; and, although ranking under the head of the most red-hot of sportsmen, I can safely acquit myself of ever wantonly destroying a deer or buffalo unless I was in need of meat; and such consideration for the feræ naturæ is common to all the mountaineers who look to game alone for their support. Although liable to an accusation of barbarism, I must confess that the very happiest moments of my life have been spent in the wilderness of the far West; and I never recall but with pleasure the remembrance of my solitary camp in the Bayou Salado, with no friend near me more faithful than my rifle, and no companions more sociable than my good horse and mules, or the attendant coyote which nightly serenaded us. With a plentiful supply of dry pine-logs on the fire, and its cheerful blaze streaming far up into the sky, illuminating the valley far and near, and exhibiting the animals, with well-filled bellies, standing contentedly at rest over their picket-pins, I would sit cross-legged enjoying the genial warmth, and, pipe in mouth, watch the blue smoke as it curled upwards, building castles in its vapoury wreaths, and, in the fantastic shapes it assumed, peopling the solitude with figures of those far away. Scarcely, however, did I ever wish to change such hours of freedom for all the luxuries of civilized life, and, unnatural and extraordinary as it may appear, yet such is the fascination of the life of the mountain hunter, that I believe not one instance could be adduced of even the most polished and civilized of men, who had once tasted the sweets of its attendant liberty and freedom from every worldly care, not regretting the moment when he exchanged it for the monotonous life of the settlements, nor sighing, and sighing again, once more to partake of its pleasures and allurements.

Nothing can be more social and cheering than the welcome blaze of the camp fire on a cold winter's night, and nothing more amusing or entertaining, if not instructive, than the rough conversation of the single-minded mountaineers, whose simple daily talk is all of exciting adventure, since their whole existence is spent in scenes of peril and privation; and consequently the narration of their every-day life is a tale of thrilling accidents and hair-breadth 'scapes, which, though simple matter-of-fact to them, appear a startling romance to those who are not acquainted with the nature of the lives led by these men, who, with the sky for a roof and their rifles to supply them with food and clothing, call no man lord or master, and are free as the game they follow.

A hunter's camp in the Rocky Mountains is quite a picture. He does not always take the trouble to build any shelter unless it is in the snow-season, when a couple of deerskins stretched over a willow frame shelter him from the storm. At other seasons he is content with a mere breakwind. Near at hand are two upright poles, with another supported on the top of these, on which is displayed, out of reach of hungry wolf or coyote, meat of every variety the mountains afford. Buffalo dépouillés, hams of deer and mountain-sheep, beaver-tails, &c., stock the larder. Under the shelter of the skins hang his powder-horn and bullet-pouch; while his rifle, carefully defended from the damp, is always within reach of his arm. Round the blazing fire the hunters congregate at night, and whilst cleaning their rifles, making or mending mocassins, or running bullets, spin long yarns of their hunting exploits, &c.

Some hunters, who have married Indian squaws, carry about with them the Indian lodge of buffalo-skins, which are stretched in a conical form round a frame of poles. Near the camp is always seen the "graining-block," a log of wood with the bark stripped and perfectly smooth, which is planted obliquely in the ground, and on which the hair is removed from the skins to prepare them for being dressed. There are also "stretching-frames," on which the skins are placed to undergo the process of dubbing, which is the removal of the flesh and fatty particles adhering to the skin, by means of the *dubber*, an instrument made of the stock of an elk's horn. The last process is the "smoking," which is effected by digging a round hole in the ground and lighting in it an armful of rotten wood or punk. Three sticks are then planted round the hole, and their tops brought together and tied. The skin is then placed on this frame, and all the holes by which the smoke might escape carefully stopped: in ten or twelve hours the skin is thoroughly smoked and ready for immediate use.

The camp is invariably made in a picturesque locality, for, like the Indian, the white hunter has ever an eye to the beautiful. The broken ground of the mountains, with their numerous tumbling and babbling rivulets, and groves and thickets of shrubs and timber, always afford shelter from the boisterous winds of winter, and abundance of fuel and water. Facing the rising sun the hunter invariably erects his shanty, with a wall of precipitous rock in rear to defend it from the gusts which often sweep down the gorges of the mountains. Round the camp his animals, well hobbled at night, feed within sight, for nothing does a hunter dread more than a visit from the horse-stealing Indians; and to be "afoot" is the acmé of his misery.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Return to Arkansa—Ladies of the Fort—Delawares—Big Nigger—Mexican Captive—Captive Negro—Preparations for a Start—Salubrity of Mountain Climate—Effects on Consumptive Patients—"Possibles" overhauled—Kit repaired—Hunting up the Animals—Their Wildness.

When I returned to the Arkansa I found a small party were making preparations to cross the grand prairie to the United States, intending to start on the 1st of May, before which time there would not be a sufficiency of grass to support the animals on the way. With these men I determined to travel, and in the mean time employed myself in hunting on the "Wet Mountain," and Fisher's Hole, a valley at the head of St. Charles, as well as up the Arkansa itself. I observed in these excursions that vegetation was in a much more forward state in the mountain valleys and the prairies contiguous to their bases than on the open plains, and that in the vicinity of the "pueblo" it was still more backward than in any other spot; on the 15th of April not a blade of green grass having as yet made its appearance round the fort. This was not from the effects of drought, for several refreshing showers had fallen since the disappearance of the snow; neither was there any apparent difference in the soil, which is a rich loam, and in the river-bottom, an equally rich vegetable mould. At this time, when the young grass had not yet appeared here, it was several inches high on the mountains and upland prairies, and the cherry and currant bushes on the creeks were bursting into leaf.

Amongst the wives of the mountaineers in the fort was one Mexican woman from the state of Durango, who had been carried off by the Comanches in one of their raids into that department. Remaining with them several years, she eventually accompanied a party of Kioways (allies of the Comanche) to Bent's Fort on the Arkansa. Here she was purchased from them and became the wife of Hawkens, who afterwards removed from Bent's and took up his abode at the "pueblo," and was my hospitable host while on the Arkansa. It appeared that her Mexican husband, by some means or another, heard that she had reached Bent's Fort, and, impelled by affection, undertook the long journey of upwards of fifteen hundred miles to recover his lost wife. In the mean time, however, she had borne her American husband a daughter, and when her first spouse claimed her as his own, and wished her to accompany him back to her own country, she only consented on condition that she might carry with her the child, from which she steadily refused to be separated. The father, however, turned a deaf ear to this request, and eventually the poor Durangueño returned to his home alone, his spouse preferring to share the buffalo-rib and venison with her mountaineer before the frijole and chile colorado of the bereaved ranchero.

Three or four Taos women, and as many squaws of every nation, comprised the "female society" on the Upper Arkansa, giving good promise of peopling the river with a sturdy race of half-breeds, if all the little dusky buffalo-fed urchins who played about the corral of the fort arrived scathless at maturity.

Amongst the hunters on the Upper Arkansa were four Delaware Indians, the remnant of a band who had been trapping for several years in the mountains, and many of whom had been killed by hostile Indians, or in warfare with the Apaches while in the employ of the states of New Mexico and Chihuahua. Their names were Jim Dicky, Jim Swannick, Little Beaver, and Big Nigger. The last had married a squaw from the Taos pueblo, and, happening to be in New Mexico with his spouse at the time of the late rising against the Americans, he very naturally took part with the people by whom he had been adopted.

In the attack on the Indian pueblo it was said that Big Nigger particularly distinguished himself, calling by name to several of the mountain-men who were amongst the attacking party, and inviting them to come near enough for him, the Big Nigger, to "throw them in their tracks." And this feat he effected more than once, to the cost of the assailants, for it was said that the Delaware killed nearly all who fell on the side of the Americans, his squaw loading his rifle and encouraging him in the fight.

By some means or another he escaped after the capture of the pueblo, and made his way to the mountains on the Arkansa; but as it was reported that a price was put upon his head, he retired in company with the other Delawares to the mountains, where they all lay "perdus" for a time; and it was pretty well understood that any one feeling inclined to reap the reward by the capture of Big Nigger, would be under the necessity of "taking him," and with every probability of catching a *Tartar* at the same time, the three other Delawares having taken the delinquent under the protection of their rifles. Although companions of the American and Canadian hunters for many years, anything but an *entente cordiale* existed towards their white confrères on the part of the Delawares, who knew very well that anything in the shape of Indian blood is looked upon with distrust and contempt by the white hunters.

Tharpe, an Indian trader, who had just returned from the Cheyenne village at the "Big Timber" on the Arkansa, had purchased from some Kioways two prisoners, a Mexican and an American negro. The former had been carried off by the Comanche from Durango when about seven years old, had almost entirely forgotten his own tongue, and neither knew his own age nor what length of time he had been a captive amongst the Indians. The degraded and miserable existence led by this poor creature had almost obliterated all traces of humanity from his character and appearance. Probably not more than twenty-five years of age, he was already wrinkled and haggard in his face, which was that of a man of threescore years. Wrapped in a dirty blanket, with his long hair streaming over his shoulders, he skulked, like some savage animal, in holes and corners of the fort, seeming to shun his fellow-men, in a consciousness of his abject and degraded condition. At night he would be seen with his face close to the rough doors of the rooms, peering through the cracks, and envying the (to him) unusual luxury within. When he observed any one approach the door, he instantly withdrew and concealed himself in the darkness until he passed. A present of tobacco, now and then, won for me the confidence of the poor examined it, turning his paw round and round, and quaintly bending his head from side to side, looking at the trap from the corners of his eyes, and with an air of mystery and puzzled curiosity, for he evidently could not make out what the novel and painful appendage could be; and every now and then smelt it and tapped it lightly on the rock. This, however, only paining the animal the more, he would lick the trap, as if deprecating its anger, and wishing to conciliate it.

After watching these curious antics for some time, as the bear seemed inclined to resume his travels, Rube, to regain his trap, was necessitated to bring the bear's cogitations to a close, and, levelling his rifle, shot him dead, cutting off his paw and returning with it to camp, where the trappers were highly amused at the idea of trapping a b'ar.

Near the same spot where Glass encountered his "scrape," some score of Sioux squaws were one day engaged in gathering cherries in a thicket near their village, and had already nearly filled their baskets, when a bear suddenly appeared in the midst, and, with a savage growl, charged amongst them. Away ran the terrified squaws, yelling and shrieking, out of the shrubbery, nor stopped until safely ensconced within their lodges. Bruin, however, preferring fruit to meat, albeit of tender squaws, after routing the petticoats, quietly betook himself to the baskets, which he quickly emptied, and then quietly retired.

Bears are exceedingly fond of plums and cherries, and a thicket of this fruit in the vicinity of the mountains is, at the season when they are ripe, a sure "find" for Mr. Bruin. When they can get fruit they prefer such food to meat, but are, nevertheless, carnivorous animals.

The game, *par excellence*, of the Rocky Mountains, and that which takes precedence in a comestible point of view, is the carnero cimmaron of the Mexicans, the Bighorn or Mountain sheep of the Canadian hunters. This animal, which partakes both of the nature of the deer and goat, resembles the latter more particularly in its habits, and its characteristic liking to lofty, inaccessible points of the mountains, whence it seldom descends to the upland valleys excepting in very severe weather. In size the mountain-sheep is between the domestic animal and the common red deer of America, but more strongly made than the latter. Its colour is a brownish dun (the hair being tipped with a darker tinge as the animal's age increases), with a whitish streak on the hind quarters, the tail being shorter than a deer's, and tipped with black. The horns of the male are enormous, curved backwards, and often three feet in length with a circumference of twenty inches near the head. The hunters assert that, in descending the precipitous sides of the mountains, the sheep frequently leap from a height of twenty or thirty feet, invariably alighting on their horns, and thereby saving their bones from certain dislocation.

They are even more acute in the organs of sight and smell than the deer; and as they love to resort to the highest and most inaccessible spots, whence a view can readily be had of approaching danger, and particularly as one of the band is always stationed on the most commanding pinnacle of rock as sentinel, whilst the others are feeding, it is no easy matter to get within rifle-shot of the cautious animals. When alarmed they ascend still higher up the mountain: halting now and then on some overhanging crag, and looking down at the object which may have frightened them, they again commence their ascent, leaping from point to point, and throwing down an avalanche of rocks and stones as they bound up the steep sides of the mountain. They are generally very abundant in all parts of the main chain of the Rocky Mountains, but particularly so in the vicinity of the "Parks" and the Bayou Salado, as well as in the range between the upper waters of the Del Norte and Arkansa, called the "Wet Mountain" by the trappers. On the Sierra Madre, or Cordillera of New Mexico and Chihuahua, they are also numerous.

The first mountain-sheep I killed, I got within shot of in rather a curious manner. I had undertaken several unsuccessful hunts for the purpose of procuring a pair of horns of this animal, as well as some skins, which are of excellent quality when dressed, but had almost given up any hope of approaching them, when one day, having killed and butchered a black-tail deer in the mountains, I sat down with my back to a small rock and fell asleep. On awaking, feeling inclined for a smoke, I drew from my pouch a pipe, and flint and steel, and began leisurely to cut a charge of tobacco. Whilst thus engaged I fellow, and I gathered from him, in broken Spanish mixed with Indian, an account of his miseries.

I sat with him one night on a log in the corral, as he strove to make me understand that once, long, long ago, he had been "muy rico"—very rich; that he lived in a house where was always a fire like that burning within, and where he used to sit on his mother's lap; and this fact he repeated over and over again, thinking that to show that once affectionate regard had been bestowed upon him, was to prove that he had been at one time an important personage. "Me quiso mucho, mucho," he said, speaking of his mother—"she loved me very, very much; and I had good clothes and plenty to eat; but that was many, many moons ago.

"Mire," he continued, "from this size," putting his hand out about three feet from the ground—"ni padre, ni madre, ni amigos he tenido yo,"—neither father, mother, nor friends have I had; "*pero patadas, bastante*"—but plenty of kicks, "*y poca carne*"—and very little meat.

I asked him if he had no wish to return to his own country. His haggard face lighted up for an instant, as the dim memory of his childhood's home returned to his callous mind. "Ay, Dios mio!" he exclaimed, "si fuera posible"—Ah, my God, if it were possible! "but no," he continued after a pause, "estoy ahora muy bruto, y asi no me quadrara à ver mi madre"—I am now no more than a brute, and in this state would not like to see my mother. "Y de mas"—and moreover—"my compadre," as he called the man who had purchased him, "is going to give me a shirt and a sombrero; what can I want more? Vaya, *es mejor asi*"—it is better as it is. One night he accosted me in the corral in an unusual degree of excitement.

"Mire!" he exclaimed, seizing me by the arm, "look here! estoy boracho"—I am drunk! "Me dio mi compadre un pedazo de aguardiente"—my godfather has given me a bit of brandy. "Y estoy tan feliz, y ligero! como paxaro, como pa-x-ar-o"—he hiccuped—and I am as happy and as light as a bird. "Me vuelo"—I am flying. "Me dicen que estoy boracho: ay que palabra bonita!"—they tell me I am drunk: *drunk*—what a beautiful word is this! "En mi vida, nunca he sentido como ahora"—never in my life have I felt as I do now. And the poor wretch covered his head with a blanket, and laughed long and loud at the trick he had played his old friend misery.

The negro, on the contrary, was a characteristic specimen of his race, always laughing, singing, and dancing, and cutting uncouth capers. He had been a slave in the semi-civilized Cherokee nation, and had been captured by the Comanches, as he himself declared, but most probably had run away from his master, and joined them voluntarily. He was a musician, and of course could play the fiddle; and having discovered an old weather-beaten instrument in the fort, Lucy Neal, Old Dan Tucker, and Buffalo Gals, were heard at all hours of the day and night; and he was, moreover, installed into the Weippert of the fandangos which frequently took place in the fort, when the hunters with their squaws were at the rendezvous.

Towards the latter end of April green grass began to show itself in the bottoms, and myself and two others, who had been wintering in the mountains for the benefit of their health, made preparations for our departure to the United States. Pack-saddles were inspected and repaired, apishamores made, lariats and lassos greased and stretched, mules and horses collected from their feeding-grounds, and their fore feet shod. A small supply of meat was "made" (*i.e.* cut into thin flaps and dried in the sun), to last until we reached the buffalo-range; rifles put in order, and balls run; hobbles cut out of raw hide, parflêche mocassins cobbled up, deerskin hunting-shirts and pantaloons patched, and all our very primitive "kit" overhauled to render it serviceable for the journey across the grand prairies, while the "possible-sack" was lightened of all superfluities—an easy task by the way. When everything was ready I was delayed several days in hunting up my animals. The Indian traders having arrived, bringing with them large herds of mules and horses, my mules had become separated from the horse and from one another, and it was with no small difficulty that I succeeded in finding and securing them. Having once tasted the green grass, they became so wild, that, at my appearance, lasso in hand, the cunning animals, knowing full well what was in store for them, threw up their heels and scampered away, defying for a long time all my efforts to catch them.

My two companions had left the United States the preceding year, having been recommended to try the effect of change of climate on a severe pulmonary disease under which both laboured. Indeed, they were both apparently in a rapid consumption, and their medical advisers had given up any hope of seeing them restored to health. They had remained in the mountains during one of the severest winters ever known, had lived upon game, and frequently suffered the privations attendant upon a mountain life, and now were returning perfectly restored, and in robust health and spirits.

It is an extraordinary fact that the air of the mountains has a wonderfully restorative effect upon constitutions enfeebled by pulmonary disease; and of my own knowledge I could mention a hundred instances where persons, whose cases have been pronounced by eminent practitioners as perfectly hopeless, have been restored to comparatively sound health by a sojourn in the pure and bracing air of the Rocky Mountains, and are now alive to testify to the effects of the revigorating climate.

That the lungs are most powerfully acted upon by the rarified air of these elevated regions, I myself, in common with the acclimated hunters, who experience the same effects, can bear witness, as it is almost impossible to take violent exercise on foot, the lungs feeling as if they were bursting in the act of breathing, and consequently the hunters invariably follow game on horseback, although, from being inured to the climate, they might be supposed to experience these symptoms in a lesser degree.

Whatever may be urged against such a climate, the *fact* nevertheless remains, that the lungs are thus powerfully affected, and that the violent action has a most beneficial effect upon these organs when in a highly diseased state.

The elevation above the level of the sea, of the plains at the foot of the mountains, is about four thousand feet, while the mountain valley of the Bayou Salado must reach an elevation of at least eight or nine thousand, and Pike's Peak has been estimated to exceed twelve thousand.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Leave the Arkansa—Forks of the River—Hydropathy—Stampede—Bent's Fort—Fremont's Men—Californian Indian—Expertness of with Lasso—Big Timber—Salt Bottom—Indian Sign—Cheyenne Village—Language of Signs—Return of Indians from Buffalo-hunt—Thieving Propensities—Tree on Fire—Bois de Vâches—Death of a Teamster—Black Leg—Coursing a Wounded Wolf—Buffalo in Sight—Another Death—Bands of Buffalo—In the Thick of 'em—A Veteran Bull—Prairie Dogs—Their Towns—The Caches—Countless Herds of Buffalo—Coon Creeks—Buffalo Stampede—Running Buffalo—A Gorged Bull—Wolves and Calves.

On the 30th of April, having the day before succeeded in collecting my truant *mulada*, I proceeded alone to the forks of the Arkansa and St. Charles, where I had observed, when hunting, that the grass was in better condition than near the pueblo, and here I remained two or three days, the animals faring well on the young grass, waiting for my two companions, who were to proceed with me across the grand prairies. As, however, the trail was infested by the Pawnees and Comanche, who had attacked every party which had attempted to cross from Santa Fé during the last six months, and carried off all their animals, it was deemed prudent to wait for the escort of Tharpe, the Indian trader, who was about to proceed to St. Louis with the peltries, the produce of his winter trade; and as he would be accompanied by a large escort of mountain-men, we resolved to remain and accompany his party for the security it afforded.

The night I encamped on the St. Charles the rain poured down in torrents, accompanied by a storm of thunder and lightning, and the next morning I was comfortably lying in a pool of water, having been exposed to the full force of the storm. This was, however, merely a breaking in for a continuation of wet weather, which lasted fifteen days without intermission, and at short intervals followed us to the Missouri, during which time I had the pleasure of diurnal and nocturnal shower-baths, and was for thirty days undergoing a natural hydropathic course of wet clothes and blankets, my bed being the bare prairie, and nothing between me and the reservoir above but a single sarape.

On the 2nd of May my two fellow-travellers arrived with the intelligence, that Tharpe could not leave until a trading-party from the north fork of the Platte came in to Arkansa, and consequently we started the next day alone. I may here mention that Tharpe started two days after us, and was killed on Walnut Creek by the Pawnees, while hunting buffalo at a little distance from camp. He was scalped and horribly mutilated.

The night before our departure the wolves ate up all the riatas by which our mules and horses were picqueted; and in the morning all the animals had disappeared but one. We saw by the tracks that they had been stampeded; and, as a very suspicious mocassin-track was discovered near the river, we feared that the Arapahós had paid a visit to the mulada. One of my mules, however, was picqueted very near the camp, and was safe; and, mounting her, I followed the track of the others across the river, and had the good fortune to find them all quietly feeding in the prairie, with the ropes eaten to their very throats. This day we proceeded about twenty-five miles down the river, camping in the bottom in a tope of cotton-woods, the rain pouring upon us all night.

The next day we still followed the stream, and encamped about four miles above Bent's Fort, which we reached the next morning, and most opportunely, as a company of waggons belonging to the United States commissariat were at the very moment getting under way for the Missouri. They had brought out provisions for the troops forming the Santa Fé division of the army of invasion, and were now on their return, empty, to Fort Leavenworth, under the charge of Captain ——, of the Quartermaster-General's department, who at once gave us permission to join his company, which consisted of twenty waggons, and as many teamsters, well armed. A government train of waggons had been attacked, on their way to Santa Fé, the preceding winter, by the Pawnees, and the whole party—men, mules, and waggons—captured; the men, however, being allowed to continue their journey, without waggons or animals. They had likewise lately attacked a party under Kit Carson, the celebrated mountaineer, who was carrying despatches from Colonel Fremont, in California, to the government of the United States, and in fact every party who had passed the plains; therefore, as a large number of loose stock was also to be carried in with the waggons, an attack was more than probable during the journey to the frontier.

Bent's Fort is a square building of adobe, flanked by circular bastions loopholed for musketry, and entered by a large gateway leading into the corral or yard. Round this are the rooms inhabited by the people engaged in the Indian trade; but at this time the Messrs. Bent themselves were absent in Santa Fé, the eldest brother, as I have before mentioned, having been killed in Taos during the insurrection of the Pueblo Indians. We here procured a small supply of dried buffalo-meat, which would suffice until we came to the buffalo-range, when sufficient meat might be procured to carry us into the States.

We started about noon, proceeding the first day about ten miles, and camped at sundown opposite the mouth of the Purgatoire—the Pickatwaire of the mountaineers, and "Las Animas" of the New Mexicans—an affluent of the Arkansa, rising in the mountains in the vicinity of the Spanish Peaks. The timber on the Arkansa becomes scarcer as we proceed down the river, the cotton-wood groves being scattered wide apart at some distance from each other; and the stream itself widens out into sandy shallows, dotted with small islands covered with brush. At this camp we were joined by six or seven of Fremont's men, who had accompanied Kit Carson from California; but, their animals "giving out" here, had remained behind to recruit them. They were all fine, hardy-looking young fellows, with their faces browned by two years' constant exposure to the sun and wind, and were fine specimens of mountaineers. They were accompanied by a Californian Indian, a young centaur, who handled his lasso with a dexterity which threw all the Mexican exploits I had previously seen into the shade, and was the means of bereaving several cows of their calves when we were in the buffalo-range.

Our next camping-place was the "Big Timber," a large grove of cotton-woods on the left bank of the river, and a favourite wintering-place of the Cheyennes. Their camp was now broken up, and the village had removed to the Platte for their summer hunt. The débris of their fires and lodges were plentifully scattered about, and some stray horses were running about the bottom. On the 5th and 6th we moved leisurely down the river, camping at Sandy Creek, and in the "Salt Bottom," a large plain covered with salitrose efflorescences. Here we proceeded more cautiously, as we were now in the outskirt of the Pawnee and Comanche country. The waggons at night were drawn up into a square, and the mules enclosed after sunset within the corral. Mine, however, took their chance outside, being always picqueted near my sleeping-place, which I invariably selected in the middle of a good patch of grass, in order that they might feed well during the night. A guard was also placed over the corral, and every one slept with his rifle at his side.

Near the Salt Bottom, but on the opposite side of the river, I this day saw seven bulls, the advanced party of the innumerable bands of buffalo we shortly passed through.

On the 7th, as I rode two or three miles in advance of the party, followed by my mules, I came upon fresh Indian sign, where a village had just passed, with their lodge-poles trailing on the ground; and presently, in a level bottom on the river, the white conical lodges of the village presented themselves a short distance on the right of the trail. I at once struck off and entered it, and was soon surrounded by the idlers of the place. It was a Cheyenne village; and the young men were out, an old chief informed me, after buffalo, and that they would return an hour before sunset, measuring the hour with his hand on the western horizon. He also pointed out a place a little below for the waggons to encamp, where he said was plenty of wood and grass. The lodges, about fifty in number, were all regularly planted in rows of ten; the chief's lodge being in the centre, and the skins of it being dyed a conspicuous red. Before the lodges of each of the principal chiefs and warriors was a stack of spears, from which hung his shield and arms; whilst the skins of the lodge itself were covered with devices and hieroglyphics, describing his warlike achievements. Before one was a painted pole supporting several smoke-dried scalps, which dangled in the wind, rattling against the pole like bags of peas.

The language of signs is so perfectly understood in the western country, and the Indians themselves are such admirable pantomimists, that, after a little use, no difficulty whatever exists in carrying on a conversation by such a channel; and there are few mountain-men who are at a loss in thoroughly understanding and making themselves intelligible by signs alone, although they neither speak nor understand a word of the Indian tongue.

The waggons shortly after coming up, we proceeded to the spot indicated by the chief, which is a camping-place well known to the Santa Fé traders by the name of the "Pretty Encampment." Here we were soon surrounded by men, women, and children from the village, who arrived in horse-loads of five or six mounted on the same animal, and, begging and stealing everything they could lay their hands upon, soon became a perfect nuisance. An hour before sundown the hunting-party came in, their animals tottering under heavy loads of buffalo-meat. Twenty-one had gone out, and in the chase had killed twenty-one bulls, which were portioned out, half the animal to each lodge. During the night a huge cotton-wood, which had been thoughtlessly set on fire, fell, a towering mass of flame, to the ground, and nearly into the midst of my animals, who, frightened by the thundering crash, and the showers of sparks and fire, broke their ropes and ran off. In the morning, however, they returned to camp at daybreak, and allowed me to catch them without difficulty.

The next night we encamped on a bare prairie without wood, having recourse to the *bois de vâches*, or buffalo-chips, which strewed the ground, to make a fire. This fuel was so wet, that nothing but a stifling smoke rewarded our attempts. During the day an invalid died in one of the waggons, in which upwards of twenty poor wretches were being conveyed, all suffering from most malignant scurvy. The first waggon which arrived in camp sent a man to dig a hole in the prairie; and on the waggon containing the dead man coming up, it stopped a minute to throw the body into the hole, where, lightly covered with earth, it was left, without a prayer, to the mercies of the wolves and birds of prey.

Bent's Fort had been made a depôt of provisions for the supply of the government trains passing the grand prairies on their way to New Mexico, and the waggons now returning were filled with sick men suffering from attacks of scurvy.* The want of fresh provisions and neglect of personal cleanliness, together with the effects of the rigorous climate, and the intemperate and indolent habits of the men, rendered them proper subjects for this horrible scourge. In Santa Fé, and wherever the volunteer troops were congregated, the disease made rapid progress, and proved fatal in an extraordinary number of cases.

As I was riding with some of the Californians in advance of the train, a large white wolf limped out of the bottom, and, giving chace, we soon came up to the beast, which on our approach crouched to the ground and awaited its death-stroke with cowardly sullenness. It was miserably poor, with its bones almost protruding from the skin, and one of its fore legs had been broken, probably by a buffalo, and trailed along the ground as it ran snarling and chopping its jaws with its sharp teeth.

On the 9th, as I rode along ahead, I perceived some dark objects in the prairie, which, refracted by the sun striking the sandy ground, appeared enormous masses, without form, moving slowly along. Riding towards them on my mule, I soon made them out to be buffalo, seventeen bulls, which were coming towards me. Jumping off the mule, I thrust the picket at the end of her lariat into the ground, and, advancing cautiously a few paces, as the prairie was entirely bare, and afforded not even the cover of a prairie-dog mound to approach under, I lay down on the ground to await their coming. As they drew near, the huge beasts, unconscious of danger, picked a bunch of grass here and there, sometimes kicking up the dust with their fore feet, and, moving at the slowest walk, seemed in no hurry to offer me a shot. Just however as they were within a hundred paces, and I was already squinting along the barrel of my rifle, a greenhorn from the waggons, who had caught a glimpse of the game, galloped headlong down the bluff, and before the wind. He was a quarter of a mile off when the leading bull, raising his head, snuffed the tainted air, and with tail erect scampered off with his companions, leaving me showering imprecations on the head of the "muff" who had spoiled my sport and supper. Whilst I was lying on the ground three wolves, which were following the buffalo, caught sight of me, and seemed instantly to divine my intentions, for they drew near, and, sitting within a few yards of me, anxiously gazed upon me and the approaching bulls, thinking, no doubt, that their persevering attendance upon them was now about to be rewarded. They were doubtless disgusted when, as soon as I perceived the bulls disappear, I turned my rifle upon one cur which sat licking his chaps, and knocked him over, giving the others the benefit of the remaining barrel as they scampered away from their fallen comrade. I now rode on far ahead, determined not to be disturbed; and by the time the waggons came into camp I had already arrived there with the choice portions of two bulls which I killed near the river. We encamped on the 9th at Choteau's Island, called after an Indian trader named Choteau, who was here beleaguered by the Pawnees for several weeks, but eventually made his escape in safety. Every mile we advanced the buffalo became more plentiful, and the camp was soon overflowing with fresh meat.

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* Called "Black Leg" in Missouri.

The country was literally black with immense herds, and they were continually crossing and recrossing the trail during the day, giving us great trouble to prevent the loose animals from breaking away and following the bands.

On the 12th a man was found dead in one of the waggons on arriving in camp, and was buried in the same unceremonious style as the first. In the evening I left the camp for a load of meat, and approached an immense herd of buffalo under cover of a prairie-dog town, much to the indignation of the villagers, who resented the intrusion with an incessant chattering. The buffalo passed right through the town, and at one time I am sure that I could have touched many with the end of my rifle, and thousands were passing almost over me; but, as I lay perfectly still, they only looked at me from under their shaggy brows, and passed on. One huge bull, and the most ferocious-looking animal I ever encountered, came to a dead stop within a yard of my head, and steadily examined me with his glaring eyes, snorting loudly his ignorance of what the curious object could be which riveted his attention. Once he approached so close that I actually felt his breath on my face, and, smelling me, he retreated a pace or two, and dashed up the sand furiously with his feet, lashing his tail at the same time about his dun sides with the noise of a carter's whip, throwing down his ponderous head, and shaking his horns angrily at me. This old fellow was shedding his hair, and his sleek skin, now bare as one's hand in many parts, was here and there dotted with tufts of his long winter-coat. From the shoulder backwards the body was, with these exceptions, perfectly smooth, but his head, neck, and breast were covered with long shaggy hair, his glowing eyes being almost hidden in a matted mass, while his coal-black beard swept his knees. His whole appearance reminded me strongly of a lion, and the motion of the buffalo when running exactly resembles the canter of the king of beasts. At last my friend began to work himself up into such a fury that I began to feel rather uncomfortable at my position, and, as he backed himself and bent his head for a rush, I cocked my rifle, and rose partly from the ground to take a surer aim, when the cowardly old rascal, with a roar of affright, took to his heels, followed by the whole band; but as one sleek, well-conditioned bull passed me within half a dozen yards, I took a flying shot, and rolled him over and over in a cloud of dust, levelling to the ground, as he fell, a well-built dog-house.

No animals in these western regions interested me so much as the prairie-dogs. These lively little fellows select for the site of their towns a level piece of prairie with a sandy or gravelly soil, out of which they can excavate their dwellings with great facility. Being of a merry, sociable disposition, they, unlike the bear or wolf, choose to live in a large community, where laws exist for the public good, and there is less danger to be apprehended from the attacks of their numerous and crafty enemies. Their towns equal in extent and population the largest cities of Europe, some extending many miles in length, with considerable regularity in their streets, and the houses of a uniform style of architecture. Although their form of government may be styled republican, yet great respect is paid to their chief magistrate, who, generally a dog of large dimensions and imposing appearance, resides in a house conspicuous for size in the centre of the town, where he may always be seen on his housetop, regarding with dignified complacency the various occupations of the busy population—some industriously bearing to the granaries the winter supply of roots, others building or repairing their houses; while many, their work being over, sit chatting on their housetops, watching the gambols of the juveniles as they play around them. Their hospitality to strangers is unbounded. The owl, who on the bare prairie is unable to find a tree or rock in which to build her nest, is provided with a comfortable lodging, where she may in security rear her round-eyed progeny; and the rattlesnake, in spite of his bad character, is likewise entertained with similar hospitality, although it is very doubtful if it is not sometimes grossly abused; and many a childless dog may perhaps justly attribute his calamity to the partiality of the epicurean snake for the tender meat of the delicate prairie-pup. However, it is certain that the snake is a constant guest; and, whether admitted into the domestic circle of the dog family, or living in separate apartments, or in copartnership with the owl, is an acknowledged member of the community at large.

The prairie-dog (a species of marmot) is somewhat longer than a guinea-pig, of a light brown or sandy colour, and with a head resembling that of a young terrier pup. It is also furnished with a little stumpy tail, which, when its owner is excited, is in a perpetual jerk and flutter. Frequently, when hunting, I have amused myself for hours in watching their frolicsome motions, lying concealed behind one of their conical houses. These are raised in the form of a cone, two or three feet above the ground, and at the apex is a hole, vertical to the depth of three feet, and then descending obliquely into the interior. Of course, on the first approach of such a monster as man, all the dogs which have been scattered over the town scamper to their holes as fast as their little legs will admit, and, concealing all but their heads and tails, bark lustily their displeasure at the intrusion. When they have sufficiently exhibited their daring, every dog dives into his burrow, but two or three who remain as sentinels, chattering in high dudgeon, until the enemy is within a few paces of them, when they take the usual summerset, and the town is silent and deserted. Lying perfectly still for several minutes, I could observe an old fellow raise his head cautiously above his hole, and reconnoitre; and if satisfied that the coast was clear, he would commence a short bark. This bark, by the way, from its resemblance to that of a dog, has given that name to this little animal, but it is more like that of a wooden toy-dog, which is made to bark by raising and depressing the bellows under the figure. When this warning has been given, others are soon seen to emerge from their houses, and, assured of their security, play and frisk about. After a longer delay, rattlesnakes issue from the holes, and coil themselves in the sunny side of the hillock, erecting their treacherous heads, and rattling an angry note of warning if, in his play, a thoughtless pup approaches too near; and, lastly, a sober owl appears, and, if the sun be low, hops through the town, picking up the lizards and cameleons which everywhere abound. At the first intimation of danger given by the sentinels, all the stragglers hasten to their holes, tumbling over owls and rattlesnakes, who hiss and rattle angrily at being disturbed. Every one scrambles off to his own domicile, and if, in his hurry, he should mistake his dwelling, or rush for safety into any other than his own, he is quickly made sensible of his error, and, without ceremony, ejected. Then, every house occupied, commences such a volley of barking, and such a twinkling of little heads and tails, which alone appear above the holes, as to defy description. The lazy snakes, regardless of danger, remain coiled up, and only evince their consciousness by an occasional rattle; while the owls, in the hurry and confusion, betake themselves, with sluggish wing, to wherever a bush of sage or grease-wood affords them temporary concealment.

The prairie-dog leads a life of constant alarm, and numerous enemies are ever on the watch to surprise him. The hawk and the eagle, hovering high in air, watch their towns, and pounce suddenly upon them, never failing to carry off in their cruel talons some unhappy member of the community. The coyote, too, an hereditary foe, lurks behind a hillock, watching patiently for hours until an unlucky straggler approaches within reach of his murderous spring. In the winter, when the prairie-dog, snug in his subterranean abode, and with granaries well filled, never cares to expose his little nose to the icy blasts which sweep across the plains, but, between eating and sleeping, passes merrily the long, frozen winter, he is often roused from his warm bed, and almost congealed with terror, by hearing the snorting yelp of the half-famished wolf, who, mad with hunger, assaults, with tooth and claw, the frost-bound roof of his house, and, with almost superlupine strength, hurls down the well-cemented walls, tears up the passages, plunges his cold nose into the very chambers, snorting into them with his earth-stuffed nose, in ravenous anxiety, and drives the poor little trembling inmate into the most remote corners, too often to be dragged forth, and unhesitatingly devoured. The rattlesnake, too, I fear, is not the welcome guest he reports himself to be; for often I have slain the wily serpent, with a belly too much protuberant to be either healthy or natural, and bearing, in its outline, a very strong resemblance to the figure of a prairie-dog.

A few miles beyond a point on the river known as the Câches, and so called from the fact that a party of traders, having lost their animals, had here *caché*, or concealed, their packs, we passed a little log fort, built by the government employés, for the purpose of erecting here a forge to repair the commissariat waggons on their way to Santa Fé. We found the fort beleaguered by the Pawnees, who killed every one who showed his nose outside the gate. They had carried off all their stock of mules and oxen, and in the vicinity had, two or three days before, attacked a company under an officer of the United States Engineers, running off with all the mules belonging to it. We were now, day after day, passing through countless herds of buffalo. I could scarcely form an estimate of the numbers within the range of sight at the same instant, but some idea may be formed of them by mentioning, that one day, passing along a ridge of upland prairie at least thirty miles in length, and from which a view extended about eight miles on each side of a slightly rolling plain, not a patch of grass ten yards square could be seen, so dense was the living mass that covered the country in every direction.

On leaving the Câches, the trail, to avoid a bend in the Arkansa, strikes to the north-east over a tract of rolling prairie, intersected by many ravines, full of water at certain seasons, known as the Coon Creeks. On this route there is no other fuel than bois de vâches, and the camps are made on naked bluffs, exposed, without the slightest shelter, to the chilling winds that sweep continually over the bare plains. I scarcely remember to have suffered more from cold than in passing these abominable Coon Creeks. With hunting-shirt saturated with the rain, the icy blast penetrated to my very bones, and, night after night, lying on the wet ground and in wet clothes, after successive days of pouring rain I felt my very blood running cold in my veins, and as if I never could again imbibe heat sufficient to warm me thoroughly.

One night, while standing guard round the camp, which was about two miles from the river, I heard an inexplicable noise, like distant thunder, but too continuous to proceed from that source, which gradually increased, and drew nearer to the camp. Placing my ear to the ground, I distinguished the roaring tramp of buffalo thundering on the plain; and as the moon for a moment burst from a cloud, I saw the prairie was covered by a dark mass, which undulated, in the uncertain light, like the waves of the sea. I at once became sensible of the imminent danger we were in; for when thousands and hundreds of thousands of these animals are pouring in a resistless torrent over the plains, it is almost impossible to change their course, particularly at night, the myriads in the rear pushing on those in front, who, spite of themselves, continue on their course, trampling down all opposition to their advance. Even if we ourselves were not crushed by the mass of beasts, our animals would most certainly be borne away bodily with the herd, and irrecoverably lost. I at once alarmed the camp, and all hands turned out, and, advancing towards the buffalo, which were coming straight upon us, by shouting and continued firing of guns we succeeded in turning them, the wind being, luckily, in our favour; and the main body branching in two, one division made off into the prairie, while the other crossed the river, where for hours we heard their splashing, sounding like the noise of a thousand cataracts. In the daytime even our cavallada was in continual danger, for immense bands of buffalo dashed repeatedly through the waggons, scarcely giving us time to secure the animals before they were upon us; and on one occasion, when I very foolishly dismounted from Panchito to fire at a band passing within a few yards, the horse, becoming alarmed, started off into the herd, and, followed by the mules, was soon lost to sight amongst the buffalo, and it was some time before I succeeded in recovering them.

As might be inferred, such gigantic sporting soon degenerates into mere butchery. Indeed, setting aside the excitement of a chase on horseback, buffalo-hunting is too wholesale a business to afford much sport—that is, on the prairies; but in the mountains, where they are met with in small bands, and require no little trouble and expertness to find and kill, and where one may hunt for days without discovering more than one band of half a dozen, it is then an exciting and noble sport.

There are two methods of hunting buffalo—one on horseback, by chasing them at full speed, and shooting when alongside; the other by "still hunting," that is, "approaching," or stalking, by taking advantage of the wind and any cover the ground affords, and crawling to within distance of the feeding herd. The latter method exhibits in a higher degree the qualities of the hunter, the former those of the horseman. The buffalo's head is so thickly thatched with long shaggy hair that the animal is almost precluded from seeing an object directly in its front; and if the wind be against the hunter he can approach, with a little caution, a buffalo feeding on a prairie as level and bare as a billiard-table. Their sense of smelling, however, is so acute, that it is impossible to get within shot when to windward, as, at the distance of nearly half a mile, the animal will be seen to snuff the tainted air, and quickly satisfy himself of the vicinity of danger. At any other than the season of gallantry, when the males are, like all other animals, disposed to be pugnacious, the buffalo is a quiet, harmless animal, and will never attack unless goaded to madness by wounds, or, if a cow, in sometimes defending its calf when pursued by a horseman; but even then it is seldom that they make any strong effort to protect their young.

When gorged with water, after a long fast, they become so lethargic that they sometimes are too careless to run and avoid danger. One evening, just before camping, I was, as usual, in advance of the train, when I saw three bulls come out of the river and walk leisurely across the trail, stopping occasionally, and one, more indolent than the rest, lying down whenever the others halted. Being on my hunting-mule, I rode slowly after them, the lazy one stopping behind the others, and allowing me to ride within a dozen paces, when he would slowly follow the rest. Wishing to see how near I could get, I dismounted, and, rifle in hand, approached the bull, who at last stopped short, and never even looked round, so that I walked up to the animal and placed my hand on his quarter. Taking no notice of me, the huge beast lay down, and while on the ground I shot him dead. On butchering the carcase I found the stomach so greatly distended, that another pint would have burst it. In other respects the animal was perfectly healthy and in good condition.

One of the greatest enemies to the buffalo is the white wolf. These persevering brutes follow the herds from pasture to pasture, preying upon the bulls enfeebled by wounds, the cows when weak at the time of calving, and the young calves whenever they straggle from the mothers. In bands of twenty and thirty they attack a wounded bull, separate him from the herd, and worry the poor animal until, weak with loss of blood and the ceaseless assaults of his active foes, he falls hamstrung, a victim to their ravenous hunger.

On one of the Coon Creeks I was witness to an attack of this kind by three wolves on a cow and calf, or rather on the latter alone, which by some accident had got separated from the herd. My attention was first called to the extraordinary motions of the cow (for I could neither see the calf nor the wolves on account of the high grass), which was running here and there, jumping high in air and bellowing lustily. On approaching the spot I saw that she was accompanied by a calf about a month old, and all the efforts of three wolves were directed to get between it and the cow, who, on her part, used all her generalship to prevent it. Whilst one executed a diversion in the shape of a false attack on the cow, the others ran at the calf, which sought shelter under the very belly of its mother. She, poor animal! regardless of the wounds inflicted on herself, sought only to face the more open attack; and the wolf in rear, taking advantage of this, made a bolder onslaught, and fastened upon her hams, getting however for his pains such a well-delivered kick in his stomach as threw him a summerset in the air. The poor cow was getting the worst of it; and the calf would certainly have fallen a victim to the ravenous beasts, if I had not most opportunely come to the rescue; and, waiting until the battle rolled near the place of my concealment, I took advantage of a temporary pause in the combat, when two of the wolves were sitting in a line, with their tongues out and panting for breath, to level my rifle at them, knocking over one dead as a stone, and giving the other a pill to be carried with him to the day of his death, which, if I am any judge of gun-shot wounds, would not be very distant. The third took the hint and scampered off, a ball from my second barrel whistling after him as he ran; and I had the satisfaction of seeing the cow cross the river with her calf, and join in safety the herd, which was feeding on the other side.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Pawnee Fork—Stormy Weather—A Contented Traveller—A Wet Night—Crossing the Creek—Packs Damaged—Cow Creek—Myriads of Buffalo—Running a Cow—Scenery of the Grand Prairies—Council Grove—Appearances of Civilization—Fat Cattle—A Storm at Night—Bugs, Beetles, and Rattlesnakes—The "Cow" Country.

WE reached Pawnee Fork of the Arkansa without any "*novedad,*" but found this creek so swollen with the rains that we feared we should experience no little trouble in crossing. We here met a train of waggons detained by the above cause on their way to Santa Fé, and we learned from them that a party of Mexican traders had been attacked by the Pawnees at this very spot a few days before, losing one hundred and fifty mules, one Indian having been killed in the fight, whose well-picked skeleton lay a few yards from our camp. Pawnee Fork being considered the most dangerous spot on the trail, extraordinary precautions were taken in guarding against surprise, and the animals belonging to the train were safely corralled before sundown, and a strong guard posted round them. Mine, however, were picketed as usual round my sleeping-place, which was on a bare prairie at some distance from the timber of the creek. Such a storm as poured upon our devoted heads that night I have seldom had the misfortune to be exposed to. The rain, in bucketsful, Niagara'd down as if a twenty-years' supply was being emptied from the heavens on that one night; vivid forked lightning, in continuous flashes, lit up the flooded prairie with its glare; and the thunder, which on these plains *is* thunder indeed, kept up an incessant and mammoth cannonade. My frightened mules crept as near my bed as their lariats would allow them, and, with water streaming from every extremity, trembled with the chilling rain.

In the early part of the night, when the storm was at its height, I was attracted to a fire at the edge of the encampment by the sound of a man's voice perpetrating a song. Drawing near, I found a fire, or rather a few embers and an extinguished log, over which cowered a man sitting cross-legged in Indian fashion, holding his attenuated hands over the expiring ashes. His features, pinched with the cold, and lank and thin with disease, wore a comically serious expression, as the lightning lit them up, the rain streaming off his nose and prominent chin, and his hunting-shirt hanging about him in a flabby and soaking embrace. He was quite alone, and sat watching a little pot, doubtless containing his supper, which refused to boil on the miserable fire. Spite of such a situation, which could be termed anything but cheering, he, like Mark Tapley, evidently thought that now was the very moment to be jolly, and was rapping out at the top of his voice a ditty, the chorus of which was, and which he gave with peculiar emphasis,—

"How happy am I!
  From care I'm free:
Oh, why are not all
  Contented like me?"—

Not for an instant intending it as a satire upon himself, but singing away with perfect seriousness, raising his voice at the third line, "Oh, why are not all," particularly at the "Oh," in a most serio-comical manner. During the night I occasionally shook the water out of my blanket, and raised my head to assure myself that the animals were safe, lying down to sleep again, perfectly satisfied that not even a Pawnee would face such a storm, even to steal horses. But I did that celebrated thieving nation gross injustice; for they, on that very night, carried off several mules belonging to the other train of waggons, notwithstanding that a strict guard was kept up all the night.

The next day, as there was no probability of the creek subsiding, it was determined to cross the waggons at any risk; and they were accordingly, one after the other, let down the steep bank of the stream, and, several yokes of oxen (which had first been swum over) being attached, were hauled bodily through the water, some swimming, and others, if heavily laden, diving across. I myself crossed on Panchito, whose natatory attempt, probably his first, was anything but first-rate; for on plunging in, and at once, into deep water, instead of settling himself down to a quiet swim, he jumped up into the air, and, sinking to the bottom, and thus gaining a fresh impetus, away he went again, carrying me, rifle, and ammunition under water at every plunge, and holding on by his neck like grim death. All my kit was contained in a pair of mule-packs, which I had had made of waterproof material. Unfortunately one had a hole in the top, which had escaped my notice. This admitted the water, which remained in the pack, several inches deep, for a fortnight. This pack contained all my papers, notes, and several manuscripts and documents relative to the history of New Mexico and its Indian tribes, which I had collected with considerable trouble and expense. On opening the trunk, I found all the papers completely destroyed, and the old manuscripts, written on bad paper, and with worse ink, reduced to a pulpy mass; every scrap of writing being perfectly illegible.

At length all the waggons were got safely over, with the exception of having everything well soaked; and as the process had occupied the whole day, we camped on the other side of the creek. Every day we found greater difficulty in procuring fuel; for, as we were now on the regular Santa Fé trail, the creeks had been almost entirely stripped of firewood, and it was the work of hours to collect a sufficiency of brush to make a small fire to boil a pot of water. On arriving at camp, and having unpacked the mules, the first thing was to sally forth in quest of wood; an expedition of no little danger, for it was always more than probable that Indians were lurking in the neighbourhood, and therefore the rifle always accompanied the fuel-hunter.

Between Pawnee Fork and Cow Creek all our former experiences of buffalo-seeing were thrown into the shade, for here they literally formed the whole scenery, and nothing but dense masses of these animals was to be seen in every direction, covering valley and bluff, and actually blocking up the trail. Nothing was heard along the line of march but pop—bang—pop—bang every minute; and the Californian Indian lassoed the calves and brought them in in such numbers, that many were again set free. I had hitherto refrained from "chasing," in order to save my poor horse; but this day, a fine band of cows crossing the trail on a splendid piece of level prairie, I determined to try Panchito's mettle. Cantering up to the herd, I singled out a wiry-looking cow (which sex is the fleetest), and, dashing at her, soon succeeded in separating her from the rest. As I steered Panchito right into the midst of a thousand of these animals, he became half mad with terror, plunging and snorting and kicking right and left; but he soon became tamer and more reconciled when the chase was a trial of speed between him and the flying cow, and he then was as much excited as his rider. The cow held her ground wonderfully well, and for a quarter of a mile kept us a couple of lengths astern, which distance my horse seemed hardly to wish to decrease. As he became warm, however, I pushed him up to her just as she entered a large band, where she doubtless thought to have found refuge; but, running through it, she again made for the open prairie, and here, after a burst of a few hundred yards, I again came up with her; but Panchito refused to lay me alongside, darting wildly on one side if I attempted to pass the animal. At last, pushing him with spur and leg, I brought him to the top of his speed, and, shooting past the flying cow in his stride, and with too much headway on him to swerve, I brushed the ribs of the buffalo with my mocassin, and, edging off a little to avoid her horns, discharged my rifle into her side, behind the shoulder. Carried forward a few paces in her onward course, she fell headlong to the ground, burying her horns deep into the soil, and, turning over on her side, was dead. She was so poor that I contented myself with the tongue, leaving the remainder of the carcase to the wolves and ravens.

We continued to find the buffalo in similar abundance as far as Cow Creek; a little beyond which we saw the last band; and on Turkey Creek the last straggler, an old grizzly bull, which I killed for a last supply of meat.

After passing the Little Arkansa, the prairie began to change its character; the surface became more broken, the streams more frequent, and fringed with better timber, and of a greater variety; the eternal cotton-wood now giving place to aspen, walnut, and hickory, and the short curly buffalo-grass to a more luxuriant growth of a coarser quality, interspersed with numerous plants and gay flowers. The dog-towns, too, disappeared; and, in lieu of these little animals, the prairie-hen boomed at rise and set of sun, and, running through the high grass, furnished ample work for the rifle. Large game was becoming scarcer; and but few antelope were now to be seen, and still fewer deer.

No scenery in nature is more dreary and monotonous than the aspect of the "grand prairies" through which we had been passing. Nothing meets the eye but a vast undulating expanse of arid waste; for the buffalo-grass, although excellent in quality, never grows higher than two or three inches, and is seldom green in colour; and, being but thinly planted, the prairie never looks green and turf-like. Not a tree or shrub is to be seen, except on the creeks, where a narrow strip of unpicturesque cotton-wood only occasionally relieves the eye with its verdant foliage. The sky, too, is generally overcast, and storms sweep incessantly over the bare plains during all seasons of the year; boisterous winds prevailing at all times, carrying with them a chilling sleet or clouds of driving snow. It was therefore a great relief to look upon the long green waving grass, and the pretty groves on the streams; although our animals soon exhibited the consequences of the change of diet, between the rich and fattening buffalo-grass, and the rank, although more luxuriant, herbage they now fed upon.

On approaching Council Grove the scenery became very picturesque; the prairie lost its flat and monotonous character, and was broken into hills and valleys, with well-timbered knolls scattered here and there, intersected by clear and babbling streams, and covered with gaudy flowers, whose bright colours contrasted with the vivid green of the luxuriant grass. My eye, so long accustomed to the burnt and withered vegetation of the mountains, revelled in this refreshing scenery, and never tired of gazing upon the novel view. Council Grove is one of the most beautiful spots in the western country. A clear rapid stream runs through the valley, bordered by a broad belt of timber, which embraces all the varieties of forest-trees common to the west. Oak, beech, elm, maple, hickory, ash, walnut, &c., here presented themselves like old friends; squirrels jumped from branch to branch, the hum of the honey-bee sounded sweet and homelike, the well-known chatter of the blue jay and catbird resounded through the grove; and in the evening the whip-poor-will serenaded us with its familiar tongue, and the drumming of the ruffed grouse boomed through the grove. The delight of the teamsters on first hearing these well-known sounds knew no bounds whatever. They danced, and sang, and hurrahed, as, one after the other, some familiar note caught their ear. Poor fellows! they had been suffering a severe time of it, and many hardships and privations, and doubtless snuffed in the air the johnny-cakes and hommany of their Missouri homes.

"Wagh!" exclaimed one raw-boned young giant, as a bee flew past; "this feels like the old 'ooman, and mush and molasses at that! if it don't, I'll be dog-gone!"

"Hurroo for old Missouri!" roared another; "h'yar's a hos as will knock the hind sights off the corn-doins. Darn my old heart if thar arn't a reg'lar-built hickory—makes my eyes sweat to look at it! This child will have no more 'mountains;' hurroo for old Missouri! Wagh!"

A trader amongst the Caw Indians had erected himself a log house at the grove, which appeared to us a magnificent palace. Himself, his cows and horses, looked so fat and sleek, that we really thought them unnaturally so; and so long had I been used to see the rawboned animals of Mexico and the mountains, that I gravely asked him what he gave them, and why he made them so unwieldy. When he told me that his stock were all very poor, and nothing to what they were when they left the States a month before, I thought the man was taking a "rise" out of me; and when I showed him my travel-worn animals, and bragged of their, to me, plump condition, he told me that where he came from it would be thought cruel to work such starved-looking beasts. There was one lodge of Caw Indians at the grove, the big village being out on the prairie, hunting buffalo. On the opposite side of the stream was a party of Americans from Louisiana, who had been out for the purpose of catching calves; and round their camp some thirty were feeding, all they had been able to keep alive out of upwards of a hundred.

From Council Grove to Caw, or Kansas, River, the country increases in beauty, and presents many most admirable spots for a settlement; but as it is guaranteed by treaty to the Caw and Osage Indians, no white man is allowed by the United States government to settle on their lands.

The night before reaching Caw River we encamped on a bare prairie, through which ran a small creek, fringed with timber. At sundown the wind, which had blown smartly the whole day, suddenly fell, and one of those unnatural calms succeeded, which so surely herald a storm in these regions. The sky became overcast with heavy inky clouds, and an intolerably sultry and oppressive heat pervaded the atmosphere. Myriads of fire-flies darted about, and legions of bugs and beetles, and invading hosts of sandflies and mosquitos droned and hummed in the air, swooping like charging Cossacks on my unfortunate body. Beetles and bugs of easy squeezability, brobdignag proportions, and intolerable odour, darted into my mouth as I gasped for breath; while sandflies with their atomic stings probed my nose and ears, and mosquitos thrust their poisoned lances into every part of my body. Hoping for the coming storm, I lay without covering, exposed to all their attacks; but the agony of this merciless persecution was nothing to the thrill of horror which pervaded my very bones when a cold clammy rattlesnake crawled over my naked ankles; a flash of lightning at the moment revealing to me the reptile, as with raised head it dragged its scaly belly across my skin, during which time, to me an age, I feared to draw a breath lest the snake should strike me. Presently the storm broke upon us; a hurricane of wind squalled over the prairie, a flash of vivid lightning, followed by a clap of deafening thunder, and then down came the rain in torrents. I actually revelled in the shower-bath; for away on the instant were washed bugs and beetles; mosquitos were drowned in millions; and the rattlesnakes I knew would now retire to their holes, and leave me in peace and quiet for the remainder of the night.

We now passed through a fine country, partially cultivated by the Caw Indians, whose log shanties were seen scattered amongst the timbered knolls. Caw River itself is the head-quarters of the nation, and we halted that night in the village, where, in the house of a white farmer, I ate the first civilized meal I had tasted for many months, and enjoyed the unusual luxury of eating at a table with knife and fork; moreover sitting on a chair, which however I would gladly have dispensed with, for I had so long been accustomed to sit Indian fashion on the ground, that a chair was at first both unpleasant and awkward. The meal consisted of hot cakes and honey, delicious butter, and lettuce and radishes. My animals fared well too, on Indian corn, and oats in the straw; and the whole expense, eleven horses and mules having been fed the better part of a day and one night, amounted to one dollar and a half, or six shillings sterling.

A troop of dragoons from St. Louis to Fort Leavenworth met us on the road on their way to the latter station, from whence they were about to escort a train of waggons, containing specie, to Santa Fé. They were superbly mounted: the horses, uniting plenty of blood with bone, so great a desideratum for cavalry, were about fifteen hands high, and in excellent condition. The dragoons themselves were all recruits, and neither soldierlike in dress nor appearance.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Kansas or Caw River—Fort Leavenworth—The Barracks—Create a Sensation—Adieu to my Animals—The Parting—Down the Missouri—Yankee Manners—Improvement in—A Scrimmage—Slaves and Slavery—Miseries of Civilised Life.

We passed the Kansas or Caw River by a ferry worked by Indians, and, striking into a most picturesque country of hill and dale, well timbered and watered, entered the valley of the great Missouri. A short distance from the river, on the left of the trail, is a tabular bluff of most extraordinary formation, being the exact and accurately outlined figure of a large fortification, with escarpments, counterscarps, glacis, and all details, perfectly delineated. A little farther on we came in sight of the garrison of Fort Leavenworth, the most western military station of the United States, and situated on the right bank of the Missouri in the Indian territory. The fort is built on an eminence overhanging the river, but, although called a fort, has no pretensions to be a military work, the only defence to the garrison being four wooden block-houses, loopholed for musketry, placed at each corner of the square of buildings. The barracks, stables, and officers' quarters surrounded this square, which is planted with trees and covered with luxuriant grass. The accommodation for the men and officers is excellent; the houses of the latter being large and commodious, and quite unlike the dirty pigsties which are thought good enough for the accommodation of British officers. The soldiers' barrack-rooms are large and airy, but no attention appears to be paid to cleanliness, and the floors, walls, and windows were dirty in the extreme. The beds are all double, or rather the bedsteads, for the bedding is separate, but in close contact. What struck me more than anything was the admirable condition of the horses, and their serviceable appearance: I did not see a single troop-horse in the squadron which would not have sold in England for eighty guineas; the price paid for them here, that is, the government contract price, being from fifty to eighty dollars, or from ten to twenty pounds.

The garrison constitutes the whole population of the place. With the exception of the sutler's store for the use of the soldiers, there are neither shops, taverns, nor private buildings of any description; and I should have fared but badly if it had not been for the hospitality of Captain Enos, of the quartermaster-general's department, who most kindly assigned to me a room in his own quarters in the garrison, and made me a member of his mess.

The officers of the dragoons, who may be said to be buried for life in this wilderness, are mostly married, and their families constitute the only society the place affords. I remember to have been not a little struck at the first sight of many very pretty, well-dressed ladies, who, after my long sojourn amongst the dusky squaws, appeared to me like the houris of paradise; and I have no doubt that I myself came in for a share of "staring," for I was dressed in complete "mountain costume," with my mahogany-coloured face shaded by a crimson turban *à la Indien*, and in all the pride of fringed deerskin and porcupine-quills; and I was paid the compliment of being more than once mistaken for an Indian chief; and on one occasion I was appealed to by two of the dragoons to decide a bet as to whether I was a white man or a redskin. One day I was passing through the dragoons' stables when the men were cleaning their horses, and my appearance created no little difference of opinion amongst the troopers as to what tribe of Indians I belonged to.

"That's a Pottowatomie," said one, "by his red turban."

"How long have you been in the west," cried another, "not to know a Kickapoo when you see him?"

"Pshaw!" exclaimed a third; "that's a white trapper from the mountains. A regular mountain-boy that, I'll bet a dollar!"

One smart-looking dragoon, however, looked into my face, and, turning round to his comrades, said, "Well, boys, I'll just bet you a dollar all round that that Injun's no other than a British officer. Wagh! And what's more, I can tell you his name."—And, sure enough, my acquaintance proved to be one of the many deserters from the British army belonging to the dragoons, and one who had known me when in the service myself.

After a few days' stay at Fort Leavenworth I made preparations for my departure to St. Louis, getting rid of my mountain-traps, and, what caused me no little sorrow, parting with my faithful animals, who had been my companions in a long and wearisome journey of more than three thousand miles, during the greater part of which they had been almost my only friends and companions. I had, however, the satisfaction of knowing that whilst with me they had never experienced a blow or an angry word from me, and had always fared of the very best—when procurable; and many a mile I had trudged on foot to save them the labour of carrying me. For Panchito I found a kind master—exacting, in return for the present, a promise that he should not be worked for the next three months; and, before leaving, I had the satisfaction of knowing that, in company with three old acquaintances who had pastured with him in the mountains, he was enjoying himself in veritable "clover," and corn unlimited, where, I doubt not, he soon regained his quondam beauty and condition. The disposal of the mules gave me greater anxiety, as there was such a demand for these animals at the moment to send with the government trains to New Mexico, that I knew to give them away would be only to put their value in the pocket of a stranger, and the animals themselves into the first waggon which crossed the plains. I therefore sold them to the commissary at the fort, and paid them daily visits in the government stables, where they revelled in the good things of this life, and had, moreover, a kind-hearted master in the shape of the Missourian teamster who had the charge of them, and who, on my giving him a history of their adventures, and a good and true account of their dispositions and qualities, promised to take every care of the poor beasts; and, indeed, was quite proud of having under his charge such a travelled team. The parting between Panchito and the mules was heartrending, and for two or three days they all refused to eat and be comforted; but at the end of that time their violent grief softened down into a chastened melancholy, which gradually merged into a steady appetite for the "corn-doins" of the liberal master of the mules; and before leaving I felt assured, from their sleek and well-filled appearance, that they were quite able to start on another expedition across the plains.

A steamboat touching at the fort, bound for the Mississippi and St. Louis, I availed myself of the opportunity, and secured myself a berth for the latter city. After running upon sand-bars every half-hour, about thirty miles below Independence we at last stuck hard and fast, and, spite of the panting efforts of the engine, there we remained during the night, and until noon the next day. A steamboat then made its appearance, bound, like ourselves, down the river, and, coming up alongside, the two captains held a consultation, which ended in *ours* recommending his passengers to "make tracks" into the other boat, as he did not expect to get off; which interchange being effected, and our fares paid to the other boat, a hawser was attached to the one aground, and she was readily hauled off—we, the passengers, having been done pretty considerably brown in the transaction. However, such rascalities as these, on the western waters, are considered no more than "smart," and are taken quite as a matter of course by the free and enlightened citizens of the model republic.

I must say that since a former visit to the States, made three years ago, I perceived a decided improvement, thanks to the Trollope and Boz castigations, in the manners and conduct of steamboat travellers, and in the accommodations of the boats themselves. With the exception of the expectorating nuisance, which still flourishes in all its disgusting "monstrosity," a stranger's sense of decency and decorum is not more shocked than it would be in travelling down the Thames in a Gravesend or Herne Bay steamer. There is even quite an arbitrary censorship established on the subject of dress and dirty linen, which is, since it is passively submitted to by the citizens, an unmistakable sign of the times. As a proof of this, one evening, as I sat outside the cabin, reading, a young man, slightly "corned," or overtaken in his drink, accosted me abruptly:—

"Stranger, you haven't are a clean shirt to part with, have you? The darned [hiccup] capen says I must go ashore bekase my 'tarnal shirt ain't clean."

And this I found to be the fact, for the man was actually ejected from the saloon at dinner-time, on his attempting to take his seat at the table in a shirt which bore the stains of julep and cocktail.

The miserable scenery of the muddy Missouri has been too often described to require any additional remarks. The steamboat touched occasionally at a wood-pile, to take in fuel; and sallow, aguish faces peered from the log-shanties as we passed. We had the usual amount of groundings on sand-bars, and thumping against snags and sawyers; passed the muddy line of demarcation between the waters of the Missouri and the "Father of Streams," and, in due course, on the fourth day ran alongside the outer edge of three tiers of huge steamboats which lined the wharf at St. Louis.

We had but one exciting episode during the voyage, in the shape of a combat between one of the "hands" of the boat (a diabolical-looking Mexican) and the mate. The latter, at a wooding station, thinking that the man was not sufficiently "spry," administered a palthogue, which not meeting the approbation of the Mejicano, that worthy immediately drew his knife and challenged the aggressor. The mate, seizing a log from the pile, advanced towards him, and the Mexican, likewise, dropping his knife, took up a similar weapon, and rushed to the attack. After a return of blows they came to close quarters, hugged, and fell, the Yankee uppermost, whose every energy was now directed to gouge out the eye of his prostrate foe, while he on his part, seizing the eye-scooper by his long hair, tugged, with might and main, to pull him to the ground. With a commendable spirit of fair play, the other "hands" danced round the combatants, administering well-directed kicks on the unfortunate Mexican's head and body, in all the excitement of unrestrainable valour. The captain, however, interfered, and secured a fair field for the gallant pair; but at length, tired of the bungling attempts of his mate to screw his antagonist's eye out of its socket, pulled him off, and, giving the Mexican a friendly kick in the ribs, desired him to get up. That worthy rose undismayed, and, ramming the end of his thumb into his eye, to drive that organ into its proper place, exclaimed, "Que carajo es este, qui no sabe pelear!" —what a cur is this, who does not know how to fight! and, shaking himself, sat upon a log, and proceeded coolly to make himself a shuck-cigar.

A negro came up to me at Fort Leavenworth, and asked me to allow him to accompany me down to St. Louis. On my saying that I did not require a servant for so short a distance, he told me that, although himself a free negro, yet no black was allowed to travel without a master, and that if he attempted it he would, in all probability, be seized and imprisoned as a runaway slave.

This reminded me that I was in that transcendently free country, ever boasting of its liberty and equality, which possesses, in a population of some eighteen millions, upwards of three millions of fellow-men in most abject yet lawful slavery;—a foul blot upon humanity, which has every appearance of being perpetuated until the evil grows to such a height as will end in curing itself.

This subject, which necessarily forces itself upon the mind of all travellers in the *Slave States*, is one which, having received the attention of the most enlightened philanthropists of both hemispheres, it would scarcely become me to dilate upon, or even notice, did I not feel that every one, however humble, should raise his voice in condemnation of that disgraceful and inhuman INSTITUTION, which, in a civilized country and an enlightened age, condemns to a social *death*, and degrades (by law) to the level of the beasts of the field, our fellow-men; subjecting them to a moral as well as physical slavery, and removing from them every possible advantage of intellectual culture or education, by which they might attain any position a grade higher than they now possess—the human beasts of burthen of inhuman masters.

It is adduced as an argument against the abolition of slavery, of course by those whose interest it is to uphold the evil, that the emancipation of the slaves would, in the present state of feeling against the negro race, be productive of effects which would convulse the whole social state of the country, or, in other words, that the whites would never rest until the whole race was exterminated in the United States. That there is a physical impossibility to any amalgamation in the southern States is as certain as that, year by year, the difficulty of removing the evil is surely increasing; and its very magnitude and the moral cowardice of the American people prevent this evil being grappled with at once, and some steps taken to oppose its perpetuation.

The three arguments brought forward by those who endeavour to palliate or uphold slavery, in feeble sophistry, plainly exhibit the weakness of the cause. First, they say, We admit the evil, but the cure will be worse than the disease. We have inherited it: the blame rests not upon us, but our fathers. If the negroes be emancipated, what is to become of them? They cannot, and *shall not*, remain in our community, on an equality with us and our children, and enjoying the privileges of white men. This *cannot* be. Moreover, the burden of supporting them will fall upon us, for they will not work unless compelled.

Secondly: We deny the sinfulness of the institution. Negroes are *not men*, but were sent into the world to be slaves to the white man. To support this they are ready with quotations from Scripture, and I blush to say that I have heard well-educated and liberal-minded men take no other ground than this to support the cause.

And, thirdly, they say no legislation can reach the evil. Law cannot deprive a citizen of his property: if so, away with liberty at once, if one act confirms rights and another removes them.

The abolitionist of the North raves at the slave-owner of the South; but let a foreigner converse with the former, and he will at once turn round and take the part of the slave-owner. It is like a third person interfering in the quarrels of man and wife. "No, no, my good sir," they say, "let us settle this question amongst ourselves; this is a family affair." No one could deny the justice of this, if they really made a *bonâ fide* attempt to grapple the evil; but I must confess that abolitionism in the United States appears to me to be anything but genuine and honest, and that, if left to themselves, the question is very, very far from any chance of settlement, unless, as I believe will be the result, the slaves themselves cut the Gordian knot of the difficulty.

The great difficulty to be combated in America, in freeing the country from the curse of slavery, is prejudice. The negro is not recognised (startling as this assertion may be) as a fellow-creature—I mean by the mass of the people. This anomaly, in a country where the very first principle of their social organism is the axiom, the incontrovertible truth, that "all men are born equal," is the more palpable, since the popular and universal outcry is, and ever has been, the same sentiment which animated the Fathers of the Revolution, when they offered to the world, as a palliation for the crime of rebellion, the same watchword which is now so prodigally used by every American tongue, and so basely and universally prostituted. "All men are born equal. Liberty, therefore, and equal rights to all"—except to those whose skins are black!

I have heard clergymen of the American church affirm their belief that the negro was placed on earth by God to be the white man's slave. I have heard many educated, and in every other respect moral and conscientious, Americans assert that negroes were not made in God's image, but were created as a link between man and the beast, to minister to the former's wants, and to support him by the toil of their hands and the sweat of their brows.

And when I add that by law it is felony to teach a negro to read or write, what argument can be offered to combat such unnatural prejudices? I believe that slaves are *generally* well treated in the United States, although many instances could be adduced where the very reverse is the fact, particularly on the western frontier. But this good treatment is on the same grounds that we take care of our horses and cows and pigs, because it is the owner's interest to do so; and the well-being—that is, the physical healthiness—of slaves is attended to in the same degree that we feed and clothe our horses, in order that they may be in condition to work for us, and thereby bring in a return for the care we have bestowed upon them.

That this question will one day shake to its very centre, if it does not completely annihilate, the union of the American States, is as palpable as the result is certain. This belief is very generally entertained by both parties, and yet in spite of it the evil is allowed to increase, although its removal or cure thereby becomes hourly more difficult.

Hundreds of plans have been suggested for the abolition of slavery, but all have been found to be impracticable, if not impossible to be carried out. Perhaps the most feasible and practicable was that proposed by the late Mr. King many years ago, and which at the time met with the fate of every other suggestion on the same subject. Mr. King, as sound and practical a statesman as the country ever produced, proposed that a certain yearly sum should be laid aside out of the revenue derived from the sale of the public lands, to be devoted to the emancipation of slaves by the purchase of their freedom. This process, however slow, at the same time that it would effect the gradual abolition of slavery, and at all events effectually prevent its increase and perpetuation, and offer a final, although distant termination to the evil, was at the same time less calculated to alarm the interested minds of the slave-owners; since, as the emancipation would be gradual, and the compensation proportionable to the loss sustained, their interests were not so materially affected as they would be by the entire removal, at one swoop, of their vested rights of property and possession. As it is, however, there is no evidence of any positive action being taken by the legislature to effect the removal of this disgraceful stain on the national character. So rabid and intolerant is the temper of the southern people when this question is mooted, and so fraught with danger to the union is the agitation even of the subject, that all discussion is shunned and avoided, and the evil hour protracted and put off, which will, as surely as that the sun shines in the heavens, one day plunge the country into a convulsion dreadful to think of or anticipate. Meanwhile the plague-spot remains: the foul cancer is eating its way; and only by its extirpation can the body it disfigures regain its healthfulness and beauty, and take its place in the scale of humanity and civilization, from which the loathsome pestilence has outpaled it.

As I have said, I notice the subject merely to add my humble voice to the cry for humanity's sake, which should never cease to stun the ears of the unholy men who, in spite of every law both human and divine, use their talents, and the intellect which God has given them, to uphold and perpetuate the curse of slavery.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Saint Louis—The Mexican War.

PROCEEDING on my arrival at St. Louis to an excellent hotel called the "Planter's House," I that night, for the first time for nearly ten months, slept upon a bed, much to the astonishment of my limbs and body, which, long accustomed to no softer mattress than mother earth, tossed about all night, unable to appreciate the unusual luxury. I found chairs a positive nuisance, and in my own room caught myself in the act more than once of squatting cross-legged on the floor. The greatest treat to me was bread: I thought it the best part of the profuse dinners of the Planter's House, and consumed prodigious quantities of the staff of life, to the astonishment of the waiters. Forks too I thought were most useless superfluities, and more than once I found myself on the point of grabbing a tempting leg of mutton mountain fashion, and butchering off a hunter's mouthful. But what words can describe the agony of squeezing my feet into boots, after nearly a year of mocassins, or discarding my turban for a great boardy hat, which seemed to crush my temples? The miseries of getting into a horrible coat—of braces, waistcoats, gloves, and all such implements of torture—were too acute to be described, and therefore I draw a veil over them.

Apart from the bustle attendant upon loading and unloading thousands and thousands of barrels of grain upon the wharf, St. Louis appeared to me one of the dullest and most commonplace cities of the Union. A great proportion of the population consists of French and Germans; the former congregating in a suburb called Vide Pôche, where they retain a few of the characteristics of their lighthearted nation, and the sounds of the fiddle and tambourine may be nightly heard, making the old fashioned, tumble-down tenements shake with the tread of the merry dancers. The Dutch and Germans have their beer-gardens, where they imbibe huge quantities of malt and honey-dew tobacco; and the Irish their shebeen-shops, where monangahela is quaffed in lieu of the "rale crather."

The town was full of returned volunteers from the wars. The twelvemonth's campaign they had been engaged in, and the brilliant victories achieved by them, which, according to the American newspapers, are unparalleled in the annals of the world's history, have converted these rowdy and vermin-covered veterans into perfect heroes; and every batch on arriving is feasted by the public, addresses are offered to them, the officers presented with swords and snuff-boxes, and honours of all kinds lavished upon them in every direction.

The intense glorifications at St. Louis, and in every other part of the United States, on the recent successes of their troops over the miserable Mexicans, which were so absurd as to cause a broad grin on the face of an unexcited neutral, make me recur to the subject of this war, which hitherto I have avoided mentioning in the body of this little narrative.

It is scarcely necessary to trace the causes of the war at present raging between the two republics of North America. The fable of the wolf and lamb drinking at the same stream may be quoted, to explain to the world the reason why the soi-disant champion of liberty has quarrelled with its sister state "for muddying the water" which the model republic uses to quench its thirst.

A lesson has been read to the citizens of the United States which ought to open their eyes to the palpable dishonesty of their government, their unblushing selfishness, and total disregard to the interests of the country, when those of themselves or of their party are at stake; and although in the present instance President Polk has overreached himself, and raised a storm which he would be only too glad to lay at any cost, yet, in the whole history of the Mexican war, the violence of party and political feeling is evident, from the 9th of May, 1846, when the first shot was fired at Palo Alto, to the date of the last half-score despatches which inform the world that General Scott "still remained at Puebla," waiting reinforcements.

It is enough to observe that the immediate cause of hostilities was the unjustifiable invasion of Mexican territory by the army of the United States to take possesion of a tract of country of which the boundary-line had been disputed between the Mexican government and one of its revolted states, and which had been annexed to the American Union before its recognition as an independent state by the country from which it had seceded.

There can be no question but that the United States had deep cause of complaint against Mexico, in the total disregard evinced by the latter to the spirit of international treaties, and the injuries inflicted upon the persons and property of American citizens; all redress of which grievances was either totally refused, or procrastinated until the parties gave up every hope of ultimate compensation. The acquisition of Texas, however, was in any case a balancing injustice, and should have wiped out all old grievances, at least those of a pecuniary nature; while, if a proper spirit of conciliation had been evinced on the part of the Americans, at the period when the question of annexation was being mooted, all danger of a rupture would have been removed; and Mexico would have yielded her claims to Texas with a better grace, if taken as a receipt in full for all obligations, than in suffering a large portion of her territory to be torn from her, against all laws held sacred by civilized nations.

It is certain that such consequences, as have resulted from the advance of the American troops from the Nueces to the Rio Grande, were never anticipated by the President of the United States, whose policy in bringing on a quasi crisis of the state affairs on the Mexican frontier, and provoking the Mexicans to overt acts which could at any moment be converted into a casus belli, was not for the sake of territorial aggrandizement, but for a purpose which, it is known to those in the secret of his policy, had an object more remote, and infinitely more important, than a rupture with the Mexican government.

At that time the position taken up by Mr. Polk and his party with regard to the Oregon question involved, as a natural consequence, the probability of a war with England; nay, more, if such position were persisted in, the certainty of a war with that power. That a majority of the people, and all the right-thinking and influential classes, were opposed to such measures as would hazard or produce such a rupture, was so palpable, that the government was conscious that any proposal for making preparations for a war with England, which they knew a perseverance in their policy would assuredly bring about, would not be favourably received, or even tolerated, and therefore they looked about them for a means of attaining their object, by blinding the eyes of the people as to their ulterior designs. Mexico was made the scapegoat. A war with that weak and powerless state would be popular, since its duration, it was supposed, could be but for a very brief period, the government having no resources whatever, and being sadly deficient in any of the sinews of war; and, moreover, such a war would be likely to flatter the national pride and conceit of the American people.

To bring, therefore, affairs to such a critical position on the Texan frontier, that a "state of war" could at any moment be assumed, and its imminence be actually very apparent, was the stroke of policy by which Polk and his party hoped to blind the people, and, profiting by it, make such preparations as would enable them to carry out their plans in connection with the Oregon question and the probable war with England. They thought that, even if hostilities broke out with Mexico, that power would at once succumb; and, in the mean time, that the war-fever in the United States would spread, and that the people would sanction an increase in the army and navy in such a case, which could at any time be made available for another purpose.

The first shot fired on the Rio Grande changed their views. Until then the Americans were in utter ignorance of the state of Mexico and the Mexicans. They never anticipated such resistance as they have met with; but, judging from the moral and physical inferiority of the people, at once concluded that all they had to do was *venire, videre, et vincere*. Children in the art of war, they imagined that personal bravery and physical strength were the only requisites for a military people; and that, possessing these qualities in as great a degree as the Mexicans were deficient in them, the operations in Mexico would amount to nothing more arduous than a promenade through the table-lands of Anahuac—the "Halls of Montezuma," in which it was the popular belief that they were destined "to revel," being the goal of their military *paseo* of six weeks.

As soon, however, as the list of killed and wounded on the fields of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma reached Washington, President Polk saw at once the error into which he had fallen. It became evident to him that all the resources of the country would be required to carry on the war with one of the most feeble powers in the world, and that the sooner he pulled his foot out of the hot water, which at the temperature of 54° 40′ was likely to scald him, the better for him and his country; for it naturally occurred to him that, if such a *scrimmage* as the Mexican war gave him considerable trouble, an affair with such a respectable enemy as England was likely to prove anything but an agreeable pastime: and hence the very speedy acceptance of Lord Aberdeen's ultimatum, and the sudden settlement of the Oregon question.

As affairs now stand, and unless the United States very materially modify the conditions under which they signify their willingness to withdraw from the Mexican territory, and notwithstanding the avowedly pacific proposals of Commissioner Trist, it is difficult to assign any probable period for the termination of the war; and it is certain that, as the Mexican armies, one after the other, dissolve before the American attacks, and the farther the latter penetrate into the country, the greater are the difficulties which they will have to surmount. Harassed by hordes of guerrillas, with a long line of country in their rear admirably adapted by nature for the system of warfare pursued by irregular troops, and through which all supplies have to pass, to defeat an army is but to increase the conquerors' difficulties, since, while before they had one tangible enemy in their front, now they are surrounded by swarms of hornets, who never run the risk of defeat by standing the brunt of a regular engagement.

Neither have the invariable and signal defeats the Mexicans have met with the same moral effect which such reverses have amongst more civilised nations. They take them as matters of course, and are not dispirited; while, on the other hand, the slightest success instils new life and energy into their hearts. Until the whole country is occupied by American troops, the war, unless immediately concluded, will be carried on, and will eventually become one of conquest. But, in the mean time, the expenses it entails upon the treasury of the United States are enormous, and hourly increasing; and it would seem that the amount of compensation for the expenses of the war, which, in money or territory, is a *sine quâ non* in the peace proposals of the American commissioner, is consequently increasing *pari passu*, and therefore the settlement of the question becomes more difficult and uncertain.

It is extremely doubtful if the Mexican people will consent to a surrender of nearly one-third of their territory, which will most probably be required as compensation for the expenses of the war, or, what is the same thing, be demanded as a security for the payment of a certain sum of money; and whether they will not rather prefer war to the knife to the alternative of losing their nationality. In reality, this war does them little harm. They were in such a state of misery and anarchy before it commenced, and have been for so long a period tyrannised over by the *republican* despots who have respectively held the reins of power, that no change could possibly make their condition more degraded; and the state of confusion and misrule attendant upon the war in such a country as Mexico is so congenial to the people, that, from my own observations, I believe them to be adverse, even on this account alone, to the termination of hostilities. Moreover, the feeling against the Americans, which was at first mere apathy, has increased to the bitterest hatred and animosity, and is sufficient in itself to secure the popular support to the energetic prosecution of the war: and the consciousness of the justice of their cause, and the injustice of the unprovoked aggression on the part of the United States, ought, and I have no doubt will, keep alive *one* spark of that honour, which prompts a people to resent and oppose a wilful and wanton attack on their liberties and nationality.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The Illinois River—Chicago—A Stage-Coach—Dovetailing—A Yankee Orator—Anglophobia—New York—The End.

After a stay of a few days in St. Louis, in order to rig myself out in civilized attire, I went on board a steamboat bound for the Illinois River and Peoria, intending to cross the prairies of Illinois to Chicago, and thence down the Canadian lakes to New York.

This river is more picturesque than the Missouri or Mississippi; the banks higher, the water clearer, and the channel dotted with pretty islands, between which the steamboat passes, almost brushing the timber on the banks. At Peoria we were transferred to stage-coaches, and, suffering a martyrdom of shaking and bad living on the road—if road it can be called—we arrived at last at Chicago—the city, that is to be, of the Lakes, and which may be termed the City of Magnificent Intentions.

Chigago, or Chicago, is situated at the south-western corner of Lake Michigan, and on the lake-shore. In spite of the pasteboard appearance of its houses, churches, and public edifices, all of wood, it is a remarkably pretty town, its streets wide and well laid out; and it will, doubtless, after it has been burned down once or twice, and rebuilt of stone or brick, be one of the finest of the western cities. It has several excellent hotels, some of which are of gigantic dimensions, a theatre, court-house, and an artificial harbour, constructed at the expense of the city.

An American stage-coach has often been described: it is a huge lumbering affair with leathern springs, and it creaks and groans over the corduroy roads and unmacadamized causeways, thumping, bumping, and dislocating the limbs of its "insides," whose smothered shrieks and exclamations of despair often cause the woodsman to pause from his work, and, leaning upon his axe, listen with astonishment to the din which proceeds from its convulsed interior.

The coach contains three seats, each of which accommodates three passengers; those on the centre, and the three with their backs to the horses, face each other, and, from the confined space, the arrangement and mutual convenience of leg-placing not unfrequently leads to fierce outbreaks of ire. A fat old lady got into the coach at Peoria, whose uncompromising rotundity and snappishness of temper, combined with a most unaccommodating pair of "limbs" (legs, on this side the Atlantic), rendered her the most undesirable vis-à-vis that a traveller could possibly be inflicted with. The victim happened to be an exceedingly mild Hosier, whose modest bashfulness prevented his remonstrating against the injustice of the proceeding; but, after unmitigated sufferings for fifty miles, borne with Christian resignation, he disappeared from the scene of his martyrdom, and his place was occupied by a hard-featured New-Yorker, the captain of one of the Lake steamboats, whose sternness of feature and apparent determination of purpose assured us that he had been warned of the purgatory in store for him, and was resolved to grapple gallantly with the difficulty. As he took his seat, and bent his head to the right and left over his knees, looking, as it were, for some place to bestow his legs, an ominous silence prevailed in the rocking coach, and we all anxiously awaited the result of the attack which this bold man was evidently meditating; the speculations being as to whether the assault would be made in the shape of a mild rebuke, or a softly-spoken remonstrance and request for a change of posture.

Our skipper evidently imagined that his pantomimic indications of discomfort would have had a slight effect, but when the contrary was the result, and the uncompromising knees wedged him into the corner, his face turned purple with emotion, and, bending towards his tormentor, he solemnly exclaimed—"I guess, marm, it's got to be done anyhow sooner or later, so you and I, marm, must jist 'dovetail.'"

The lady bounded from her seat, aghast at the mysterious proposal.

"Must what, sir-r?"

"Dovetail, marm; you and I have got to dovetail, and no two ways about it."

"Dovetail me, you inhuman savage!" she roared out, shaking her fist in the face of the skipper, who shrank, alarmed, into his corner; "dovetail a lone woman in a Christian country! if thar's law on airth, sir-r, and in the state of Illinoy, I'll have you hanged!

"Driver, stop the coach," she shrieked from the window; "I go no farther with this man. I believe I ar' a free 'ooman, and my name is Peck. Young man," she pathetically exclaimed to the driver, who sought to explain matters, whilst we, inside, were literally convulsed with laughter, "my husband shall larn of this, as shiure as shiooting. Open the door, I say, and let me out!" And, spite of all our expostulations, she actually left the coach and sought shelter in a house at the road-side; and we heard her, as we drove off, muttering "Dovetail me, will they? the Injine savages! if ther's law in Illinoy, I'll have him hanged!"

It is unnecessary to say that "dovetailing" is the process of mutually accommodating each other's legs followed by stage-coach and omnibus passengers; but the term—certainly the first time I had ever heard it used in that sense—shocked and alarmed the modesty of the worthy Mrs. Peck of Illi*noy*.

A canal is in course of construction in the State of Illinois, to connect the waters of the lakes with the Mississippi—a gigantic undertaking, but one which will be of the greatest benefit to the western country. When this canal is completed, the waters of Lake Superior will, therefore, communicate with the Gulf of Mexico by way of the Mississippi, as they do already with the North Atlantic by means of the Welland and Rideau canals, which pass through Canada; and, even already, vessels have been spoken in mid-ocean, built on Lakes Michigan and Huron, cleared from Chigago, and bound for England, passing an inland navigation of upwards of three thousand miles.

Leaving Chigago, I crossed the lake to Kalamazoo, whence I "railed" across the Michigan peninsula to Detroit, the chief city of the State of Michigan. This railroad was a very primitive affair, with but one line of rails, which, in very many places, were entirely divested of the iron, and in these spots the passengers were requested to "assist" the locomotive over the "bad places." However, after killing several hogs and cows, we arrived safe enough at Detroit.

I remarked that, since a former visit to the United States, three or four years ago, there had been a very palpable increase in the feeling of jealousy and dislike to England and everything British which has very generally characterized the free and enlightened citizens from the affair of Lexington to the present time. I must, however, do them the justice to declare, that in no one instance have I ever perceived that feeling evinced towards an individual; but it exists most assuredly as a national feeling, and is exhibited in the bitterest and most uncompromising spirit in all their journals, and the sayings and doings of their public men. Thus, in travelling through the United States, an Englishman is perpetually hearing his country and its institutions abused. Everything he admires is at once seized upon, to be tortured into a comparison with the same thing in England. But what is more amusing is, that it is a very general belief that, from the Queen down to the gruel-stirrer in Marylebone workhouse, everybody's time is occupied with the affairs of the United States, and all their pleasures turned to gall and wormwood by the bitter envy they feel at her well-being and prosperity.

In passing down the lakes, I took a passage from Detroit to Buffalo in a Canadian steamer, which, by-the-by, was the most tastefully decorated and best-managed boat on the lake. As we passed through the Detroit River, which connects Lakes Erie and St. Clair, we had a fine view of the Canadian as well as the American shore; and the contrast between the flourishing settlements and busy cities of the latter, and the quaint, old-fashioned villages of the French Canadians, was certainly sufficiently striking. As the boat passed Malden, celebrated as being the scene of stirring events in the Indian wars, and the more recent one of 1812, I ascended, spite of the burning sun, to the upper deck, in order to obtain a view of the shore, which at this point, where the river enters the lake, is very picturesque and beautiful. I found a solitary passenger seated on the roof, which was red-hot with the burning rays of the sun, squirting his tobacco-juice fast and furiously, and with his eyes bent on the shore, and a facetious and self-satisfied grin on his lank, sallow countenance. His broad-brimmed brown beaver hat, with dishevelled nap, suit of glossy black, including a shining black satin waistcoat, of course proclaimed him to be a citizen. Waving his hand towards the Canada shore, he asked me in a severe tone,—

"What do you call this, sir? Is this the land of the Queen of England, sir?"

"Well, I guess it ain't nothing else," answered, for me, the pilot of the boat. "But," he continued, "it ain't a going to be so much longer."

"Longer, sir!" quoth my severe interrogator; "too long by half has that unfortunate country been oppressed by British tyrants. Look thar, sir," waving his arm towards the opposite shore; "thar's a sight, sir, where a man can look up to G— A'mighty's heavens, and bless him for having made him a citizen of the *United* States!"

"A fine country," I observed; "there's no doubt of it."

"A fine country, sir! the first country in the world, sir; and feeds the starving English with what it can't consume itself, sir. The philanthropy of our country" (he took me for a citizen) "flies on the wings of the wind, sir, and bears to the hungry slaves of the Queen of England corn, sir, and bread-doins of every description. Yes, sir! and to show them, sir, that we can feed 'em with one hand and whip 'em with the other, we send it over in a ship of war, which once carried their flag, until it was lowered to the flag of freedom. I allude, sir" (turning to me), "to the frigate 'Macedonian,' and the stars and stripes of our national banner."

This speech, delivered in the most pompous manner, and with exuberant gesture, was too much for my gravity, and I exploded in an immoderate fit of laughter.

"Laugh, sir," he resumed, "pray laugh. I perceive you are not a *native*, and your countrymen had ort to laugh without loss of time; for soon, sir, will their smile of triumph be turned to a howl of despair, when Liberty treads to the earth your aristocracy—your titled lords, and the star-spangled banner waves over Windsor Palace." Saying which, and squirting over the deck a shower of tobacco-spray, he turned magnificently away.

"A smart man that, stranger," said the pilot to me, giving the wheel a spoke to port—"one of the smartest men in these parts." This I easily believed.

We had the misfortune to damage a part of the machinery just after entering Lake Erie, and were compelled to wait until another steamboat made her appearance, and towed us back to Detroit, where it took twenty-four hours to repair damages.

From Buffalo I travelled by railroad to Albany, on the Hudson, and, descending that magnificent river, reached New York early in July, in eight travelling days from St. Louis, a distance of—I am afraid to say how many thousand miles.

From New York the good ship "New World" carried myself and a dozen fellow-passengers, spite of contrary winds, in thirty days to Liverpool, where I arrived, *sin novedad*, some time in the middle of August, 1847.

THE END.

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The London newspapers of October 1848 contained the mournful tidings of the death, at St Louis on the Missisipi, and at the early age of twenty-eight, of Lieutenant George Frederick Ruxton, formerly of her Majesty's 89th regiment, the author of the following sketches.

Many men, even in the most enterprising periods of our history, have been made the subjects of elaborate biography, with far less title to the honour than this lamented young officer. Time was not granted him to embody in a permanent shape a tithe of his personal experiences and strange adventures in three quarters of the globe. Considering, indeed, the amount of physical labour he underwent, and the extent of the fields over which his wanderings spread, it is almost surprising he found leisure to write so much. At the early age of seventeen, Mr Ruxton quitted Sandhurst, to learn the practical part of a soldier's profession in the civil wars of Spain. He obtained a commission in a squadron of lancers then attached to the division of General Diego Leon, and was actively engaged in several of the most important combats of the campaign. For his marked gallantry on these occasions, he received from Queen Isabella II., the cross of the first class of the order of St Fernando, an honour which has seldom been awarded to one so young. On his return from Spain he found himself gazetted to a commission in the 89th regiment; and it was whilst serving with that distinguished corps in Canada that he first became acquainted with the stirring scenes of Indian life, which he has since so graphically portrayed. His eager and enthusiastic spirit soon became wearied with the monotony of the barrack-room; and, yielding to that impulse which in him was irresistibly developed, he resigned his commission, and directed his steps towards the stupendous wilds, tenanted only by the red Indian, or by the solitary American trapper.

Those familiar with Mr Ruxton's writings cannot fail to have remarked the singular delight with which he dwells upon the recollections of this portion of his career, and the longing which he carried with him, to the hour of his death, for a return to those scenes of primitive freedom. "Although liable to an accusation of barbarism," he writes, "I must confess that the very happiest moments of my life have been spent in the wilderness of the Far West; and I never recall, but with pleasure, the remembrance of my solitary camp in the Bayou Salade, with no friend near me more faithful than my rifle, and no companions more sociable than my good horse and mules, or the attendant cayute which nightly serenaded us. With a plentiful supply of dry pine-logs on the fire, and its cheerful blaze streaming far up into the sky, illuminating the valley far and near, and exhibiting the animals, with well-filled bellies, standing contentedly at rest over their picket-fire, I would sit cross-legged, enjoying the genial warmth, and, pipe in mouth, watch the blue smoke as it curled upwards, building castles in its vapoury wreaths, and, in the fantastic shapes it assumed, peopling the solitude with figures of those far away. Scarcely, however, did I ever wish to change such hours of freedom for all the luxuries of civilised life; and, unnatural and extraordinary as it may appear, yet such is the fascination of the life of the mountain hunter, that I believe not one instance could be adduced of even the most polished and civilised of men, who had once tasted the sweets of its attendant liberty, and freedom from every worldly care, not regretting the moment when he exchanged it for the monotonous life of the settlements, nor sighing and sighing again once more to partake of its pleasures and allurements."

On his return to Europe from the Far West, Mr Ruxton, animated with a spirit as enterprising and fearless as that of Raleigh, planned a scheme for the exploration of Central Africa, which was thus characterised by the president of the Royal Geographical Society, in his anniversary address for 1845: —"To my great surprise, I recently conversed with an ardent and accomplished youth, Lieutenant Ruxton, late of the 89th regiment, who had formed the daring project of traversing Africa in the parallel of the southern tropic, and has actually started for this purpose. Preparing himself by previous excursions on foot, in North Africa and Algeria, he sailed from Liverpool early in December last, in the Royalist, for Ichaboe. From that spot he was to repair to Walvish Bay, where we have already mercantile establishments. The intrepid traveller had received from the agents of these establishments such favourable accounts of the nations towards the interior, as also of the nature of the climate, that he has the most sanguine hopes of being able to penetrate to the central region, if not of traversing it to the Portuguese colonies of Mozambique. If this be accomplished, then indeed will Lieutenant Ruxton have acquired for himself a permanent name among British travellers, by making us acquainted with the nature of the axis of the great continent of which we possess the southern extremity."

In pursuance of this hazardous scheme, Ruxton, with a single companion, landed on the coast of Africa, a little to the south of Ichaboe, and commenced his journey of exploration. But it seemed as if both nature and man had combined to baffle the execution of his design. The course of their travel lay along a desert of moving sand, where no water was to be found, and little herbage, save a coarse tufted grass, and twigs of the resinous myrrh. The immediate place of their destination was Angra Peguena, on the coast, described as a frequented station, but which in reality was deserted. One ship only was in the offing when the travellers arrived, and, to their inexpressible mortification, they discovered that she was outward bound. No trace was visible of the river or streams laid down in the maps as falling into the sea at this point, and no resource was left to the travellers save that of retracing their steps—a labour for which their strength was hardly adequate. But for the opportune assistance of a body of natives, who encountered them at the very moment when they were sinking from fatigue and thirst, Ruxton and his companion would have been added to the long catalogue of those whose lives have been sacrificed in the attempt to explore the interior of that fatal country.

The jealousy of the traders, and of the missionaries settled on the African coast, who constantly withheld or perverted that information which was absolutely necessary for the successful prosecution of the journey, induced Ruxton to abandon the attempt for the present. He made, however, several interesting excursions towards the interior, and more especially in the country of the Bosjesmans.

Finding his own resources inadequate for the accomplishment of his favourite project, Mr Ruxton, on his return to England, made application for Government assistance. But though this demand was not altogether refused, it having been referred to the Council of the Royal Geographical Society, and favourably reported upon by that body, so many delays interposed that Ruxton, in disgust, resolved to withdraw from the scheme, and to abandon that field of African research which he had already contemplated from its borders. He next bent his steps to Mexico; and, fortunately, has presented to the world his reminiscences of that country, in one of the most fascinating volumes which, of late years, has issued from the press. It would, however, appear that the African scheme, the darling project of his life, had again recurred to him at a later period; for, in the course of the present spring, before setting out on that journey which was destined to be his last, the following expressions occur in one of his letters:—

"My movements are uncertain, for I am trying to get up a yacht voyage to Borneo and the Indian Archipelago; have volunteered to Government to explore Central Africa; and the Aborigines Protection Society wish me to go out to Canada to organise the Indian tribes; whilst, for my own part and inclination, I wish to go to all parts of the world at once."

As regards the volume to which this notice serves as Preface, the editor does not hesitate to express a very high opinion of its merits. Written by a man untrained to literature, and whose life, from boyhood upwards, was passed in the field and on the road, in military adventure and travel, its style is yet often as remarkable for graphic terseness and vigour, as its substance every where is for great novelty and originality. The narrative of "Life in the Far West" was first offered for insertion in *Blackwood's Magazine* in the spring of 1848, when the greater portion of the manuscript was sent, and the remainder shortly followed. During its publication in that periodical, the wildness of the adventures related excited suspicions in certain quarters as to their actual truth and fidelity. It may interest the reader to know that the scenes described are pictures from life, the results of the author's personal experience. The following are extracts from letters addressed by him, in the course of last summer, to the conductors of the Magazine above named:—

"I have brought out a few more softening traits in the characters of the mountaineers—but not at the sacrifice of truth—for some of them have their good points; which, as they are rarely allowed to rise to the surface, must be laid hold of at once before they sink again. Killbuck—that 'old hos' *par exemple*, was really pretty much of a gentleman, as was La Bonté. Bill Williams, another 'hard case,' and Rube Herring, were 'some' too.

"The scene where La Bonté joins the Chase family is so far true, that he did make a sudden appearance; but, in reality, a day before the Indian attack. The Chases (and I wish I had not given the proper name *) did start for the Platte alone, and were stampedoed upon the waters of the Platte.

"The Mexican fandango *is true to the letter.*

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* In accordance with this suggestion, the name was changed to Brand. The mountaineers, it seems, are more sensitive to type than to tomahawks; and poor Ruxton, who always contemplated another expedition among them, would sometimes jestingly speculate upon his reception, should they learn that he had shown them up in print.

It does seem difficult to understand how they contrived to keep their knives out of the hump-ribs of the mountaineers; but how can you account for the fact, that, the other day, 4000 Mexicans, with 13 pieces of artillery, behind strong entrenchments and two lines of parapets, were routed by 900 raw Missourians; 300 killed, as many more wounded, all their artillery captured, as well as several hundred prisoners; and that not one American was killed in the affair? *This is positive fact.*

"I myself, with three trappers, cleared a fandango at Taos, armed only with bowie-knives—some score Mexicans, at least, being in the room.

"With regard to the incidents of Indian attacks, starvation, cannibalism, &c., I have invented not one out of my own head. They are all matters of history in the mountains; but I have, no doubt, jumbled the *dramatis personæ* one with another, and may have committed anachronisms in the order of their occurrence."

Again he wrote as follows:—

"I think it would be as well to correct a misapprehension as to the truth or fiction of the paper.

It is no *fiction.* There is no incident in it which has not actually occurred, nor one character who is not well known in the Rocky Mountains, with the exception of two whose names are changed—the originals of these being, however, equally well known with the others."

His last letter, written just before his departure from England, a few weeks previously to his death, will hardly be read by any one who ever knew the writer, without a tear of sympathy for the sad fate of this fine young man, dying miserably in a strange land, before he had well commenced the hazardous journey whose excitement and dangers he so joyously anticipated:—

"As you say, human nature can't go on feeding on civilised fixings in this 'big village;' and this child has felt like going West for many a month, being half froze for buffler meat and mountain doins. My route takes me *viâ* New York, the Lakes, and St Louis, to Fort Leavenworth, or Independence on the Indian frontier. Thence packing my 'possibles' on a mule, and mounting a buffalo horse (Panchito, if he is alive), I strike the

Santa Fé trail to the Arkansa, away up that river to the mountains, winter in the Bayou Salade, where Killbuck and La Bonté joined the Yutes, cross the mountains next spring to Great Salt Lake—and that's far enough to look forward to—always supposing my hair is not lifted by Comanche or Pawnee on the scalping route of the Coon Creeks and Pawnee Fork."

Poor fellow! he spoke lightly, in the buoyancy of youth and a confident spirit, of the fate he little thought to meet, but which too surely overtook him—not indeed by Indian blade, but by the no less deadly stroke of disease. Another motive, besides that love of rambling and adventure, which, once conceived and indulged, is so difficult to eradicate, impelled him across the Atlantic. He had for some time been out of health at intervals, and he thought the air of his beloved prairies would be efficacious to work a cure. In a letter to a friend, in the month of May last, he thus referred to the probable origin of the evil:—

"I have been confined to my room for many days, from the effects of an accident I met with in the Rocky Mountains, having been spilt from the bare back of a mule, and falling on the sharp picket of an Indian lodge on the small of my back. I fear I injured my spine, for I have never felt altogether the thing since, and shortly after I saw you, the symptoms became rather ugly. However, I am now getting round again."

His medical advisers shared his opinion that he had sustained internal injury from this ugly fall; and it is not improbable that it was the remote, but real cause of his dissolution. From whatsoever this ensued, it will be a source of deep and lasting regret to all who ever enjoyed opportunities of appreciating the high and sterling qualities of George Frederick Ruxton. Few men, so prepossessing on first acquaintance, gained so much by being better known. With great natural abilities and the most dauntless bravery, he united a modesty and gentleness peculiarly pleasing. Had he lived, and resisted his friends' repeated solicitations to abandon a roving life, and settle down in England, there can be little doubt that he would have made his name eminent on the list of those daring and persevering men, whose travels in distant and dangerous lands have accumulated for England, and for the world, so rich a store of scientific and general information. And, although the few words it has been thought right and becoming here to devote to his memory, will doubtless be more particularly welcome to his personal friends, we are persuaded that none will peruse without interest this brief tribute to the merits of a gallant soldier, and accomplished English gentleman.

LIFE IN THE FAR WEST.

CHAPTER I.

Away to the head waters of the Platte, where several small streams run into the south fork of that river, and head in the broken ridges of the "Divide" which separates the valleys of the Platte and Arkansa, were camped a band of trappers on a creek called Bijou. It was the month of October, when the early frosts of the coming winter had crisped and dyed with sober brown the leaves of the cherry and quaking ash belting the brooks; and the ridges and peaks of the Rocky Mountains were already covered with a glittering mantle of snow, sparkling in the still powerful rays of the autumn sun.

The camp had all the appearance of permanency; for not only did it comprise one or two unusually comfortable shanties, but the numerous stages on which huge stripes of buffalo meat were hanging in process of cure, showed that the party had settled themselves here in order to lay in a store of provisions, or, as it is termed in the language of the mountains, "to make meat." Round the camp fed twelve or fifteen mules and horses, their fore-legs confined by hobbles of raw hide; and, guarding these animals, two men paced backwards and forwards, driving in the stragglers, ascending ever and anon the bluffs which overhung the river, and leaning on their long rifles, whilst they swept with their eyes the surrounding prairie. Three or four fires burned in the encampment, at some of which Indian women carefully tended sundry steaming pots; whilst round one, which was in the centre of it, four or five stalwart hunters, clad in buckskin, sat cross-legged, pipe in mouth.

They were a trapping party from the north fork of Platte, on their way to wintering-ground in the more southern valley of the Arkansa; some, indeed, meditating a more extended trip, even to the distant settlements of New Mexico, the paradise of mountaineers. The elder of the company was a tall gaunt man, with a face browned by twenty years' exposure to the extreme climate of the mountains; his long black hair, as yet scarcely tinged with grey, hanging almost to his shoulders, but his cheeks and chin clean shaven, after the fashion of the mountain men. His dress was the usual hunting-frock of buckskin, with long fringes down the seams, with pantaloons similarly ornamented, and moccasins of Indian make. Whilst his companions puffed their pipes in silence, he narrated a few of his former experiences of western life; and whilst the buffalo "hump-ribs" and "tender loin" are singing away in the pot, preparing for the hunters' supper, we will note down the yarn as it spins from his lips, giving it in the language spoken in the "far west:"—

"'Twas about 'calf-time,' maybe a little later, and not a hunderd year ago, by a long chalk, that the biggest kind of rendezvous was held 'to' Independence, a mighty handsome little location away up on old Missoura. A pretty smart lot of boys was camp'd thar, about a quarter from the town, and the way the whisky flowed that time was 'some' now, *I* can tell you. Thar was old Sam Owins—him as got 'rubbed out'* by the Spaniards at Sacramenty, or Chihuahuy, this hos doesn't know which, but he 'went under'† any how. Well, Sam had his train along, ready to hitch up for the Mexican country—twenty thunderin big Pittsburg waggons; and the way *his* Santa Fé boys took in the liquor beat all—eh, Bill?"

"*Well*, it did."

"Bill Bent—his boys camped the other side the trail, and they was all mountain men, wagh!—and Bill Williams, and Bill Tharpe (the Pawnees took his hair on Pawnee Fork last spring): three Bills, and them three's all 'gone under.' Surely Hatcher went out that time; and wasn't Bill Garey along, too? Didn't him and Chabonard sit in camp for twenty hours at a deck of Euker? Them was Bent's Indian traders up on Arkansa. Poor Bill Bent! them Spaniards made meat of him. He lost his topknot to Taos. A 'clever' man was Bill Bent as *I* ever know'd trade a robe or 'throw' a bufler in his tracks. Old St Vrain could knock the hind-sight off him though, when it came to shootin, and old silver-heels spoke true, she did: 'plum-center' she was, eh?"

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* Killed, } both terms adapted from the Indian figurative
† Died, } language.

"*Well*, she wasn't nothin else."

"The Greasers* payed for Bent's scalp, they tell me. Old St Vrain went out of Santa Fé with a company of mountain men, and the way they made 'em sing out was 'slick as shootin'. He 'counted a coup,' did St Vrain. He throwed a Pueblo as had on poor Bent's shirt. I guess he tickled that niggur's hump-ribs. Fort William† aint the lodge it was, an' never will be agin, now he's gone under; but St Vrain's 'pretty much of a gentleman,' too; if he aint, I'll be dog-gone, eh, Bill?"

"He is *so-o*."

"Chavez had his waggons along. He was only a Spaniard any how, and some of his teamsters

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* The Mexicans are called "Spaniards" or "Greasers" (from their greasy appearance) by the Western people.

† Bent's Indian trading fort on the Arkansa.

put a ball into him his next trip, and made a raise of *his* dollars, wagh! Uncle Sam hung 'em for it, I heard, but can't b'lieve it, nohow. If them Spaniards wasn't born for shootin', why was beaver made? You was with us that spree, Jemmy?"

"No *sirre-e;* I went out when Spiers lost his animals on Cimmaron: a hunderd and forty mules and oxen was froze that night, wagh!"

"Surely Black Harris was thar; and the darndest liar was Black Harris—for lies tumbled out of his mouth like boudins out of a bufler's stomach. He was the child as saw the putrefied forest in the Black Hills. Black Harris come in from Laramie; he'd been trapping three year an' more on Platte and the 'other side;' and, when he got into Liberty, he fixed himself right off like a Saint Louiy dandy. Well, he sat to dinner one day in the tavern, and a lady says to him:—

"'Well, Mister Harris, I hear you're a great travler.'

"'Travler, marm,' says Black Harris, 'this niggur's no travler; I ar' a trapper, marm, a mountain-man, wagh!'

"'Well, Mister Harris, trappers are great travlers, and you goes over a sight of ground in your perishinations, I'll be bound to say.'

"'A sight, marm, this coon's gone over, if that's the way your 'stick floats.'* I've trapped beaver on Platte and Arkansa, and away up on Missoura and Yaller Stone; I've trapped on Columbia, on Lewis Fork, and Green River; I've trapped, marm, on Grand River and the Heely (Gila). I've fout the 'Blackfoot' (and d——d bad Injuns they ar); I've 'raised the hair'* of more *than one* Apach, and made a Rapaho 'come' afore now; I've trapped in heav'n, in airth, and h—; and scalp my old head, marm, but I've seen a putrefied forest.'

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* Meaning—if that's what you mean. The "stick" is tied to the beaver trap by a string; and, floating on the

"'La, Mister Harris, a what?'

"'A putrefied forest, marm, as sure as my rifle's got hind-sights, and *she* shoots center. I was out on the Black Hills, Bill Sublette knows the time—the year it rained fire—and every body knows when that was. If thar wasn't cold doins about that time, this child wouldn't say so. The snow was about fifty foot deep, and the bufler lay dead on the ground like bees after a beein'; not whar we was tho', for *thar* was no bufler, and no meat, and me and my band had been livin' on our mocassins (leastwise the parflesh †), for six weeks; and poor doins that feedin' is, marm, as you'll never know. One day we crossed a 'cañon' and over a 'divide,' and got into a peraira, whar was green grass, and green trees, and green leaves on the trees, and birds singing in the green leaves, and

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water, points out its position, should a beaver have carried it away.

* Scalped.

† Soles made of buffalo hide.

this in Febrary, wagh! Our animals was like to die when they see the green grass, and we all sung out, 'hurraw for summer doins.'

"'Hyar goes for meat,' says I, and I jest ups old Ginger at one of them singing birds, and down come the crittur elegant; its darned head spinning away from the body, but never stops singing, and when I takes up the meat, I finds it stone, wagh! 'Hyar's damp powder and no fire to dry it,' I says, quite skeared.

"'Fire be dogged,' says old Rube. 'Hyar's a hos as'll make fire come;' and with that he takes his axe and lets drive at a cotton wood. Schr-u-k—goes the axe agin the tree, and out comes a bit of the blade as big as my hand. We looks at the animals, and thar they stood shaking over the grass, which I'm dog-gone if it wasn't stone, too. Young Sublette comes up, and he'd been clerking down to the fort on Platte, so he know'd something. He looks and looks, and scrapes the trees with his butcher knife, and snaps the grass like pipe stems, and breaks the leaves a-snappin' like Californy shells.'

"'What's all this, boy?' I asks.

"'Putrefactions,' says he, looking smart, 'putrefactions, or I'm a niggur.'

"'La, Mister Harris,' says the lady, 'putrefactions! why, did the leaves, and the trees, and the grass smell badly?'

"'Smell badly, marm!' says Black Harris, 'would a skunk stink if he was froze to stone? No, marm, this child didn't know what putrefaction was, and young Sublette's varsion wouldn't 'shine' nohow, so I chips a piece out of a tree and puts it in my trap-sack, and carries it in safe to Laramie. Well, old Captain Stewart, (a clever man was that, though he was an Englishman), he comes along next spring, and a Dutch doctor chap was along too. I shows him the piece I chipped out of the tree, and he called it a putrefaction too; and so, marm, if that wasn't a putrefied peraira, what was it? For this hos doesn't know, and *he* knows 'fat cow' from 'poor bull,' anyhow.'

" Well, old Black Harris is gone under too, I believe. He went to the 'Parks' trapping with a Vide Pôche Frenchman, who shot him for his bacca and traps. Darn them Frenchmen, they're no account any way you lays your sight. (Any bacca in your bag, Bill? this beaver feels like chawing.)

" Well, any how, thar was the camp, and they was goin to put out the next morning; and the last as come out of Independence was that ar Englishman. He'd a nor-west* capote on, and a two-shoot gun rifled. Well, them English are darned fools; they can't fix a rifle any ways; but that one did shoot 'some;' leastwise *he* made it throw plum-center. He made the bufler 'come,' *he* did, and fout well at Pawnee Fork too. What was his name? All the boys called him Cap'en, and he got his fixings from old Choteau; but what he wanted out thar in the mountains, I never jest rightly know'd. He was no trader, nor a trapper, and flung about his dollars right smart. Thar was old grit in him, too, and a hair of the black b'ar at that.* They say he took the bark off the Shians when he cleared out of the village with old Beaver Tail's squaw. He'd been on Yaller Stone afore that: Leclerc know'd him in the Blackfoot, and up in the Chippeway country; and he had the best powder as ever I flashed through life, and his gun was handsome, that's a fact. Them thar locks was grand; and old Jake Hawken's nephey, (him as trapped on Heeley that time), told me, the other day, as he saw an English gun on Arkansa last winter as beat all off hand.

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* The Hudson Bay Company having amalgamated with the American North West Company, is known by the name 'North West' to the southern trappers. Their employés usually wear Canadian capotes.

"Nigh upon two hundred dollars I had in my possibles, when I went to that camp to see the boys afore they put out; and you know, Bill, as I sat to 'Euker' and 'seven up'† till every cent was gone.

"'Take back twenty, old coon,' says Big John.

"'H—'s full of such takes back,' says I; and I puts back to town and fetches the rifle and the old mule, puts my traps into the sack, gets credit for a couple of pounds of powder at Owin's store, and hyar I ar on Bijou, with half a pack of beaver, and running meat yet, old hos: so put a log on, and let's have a smoke.

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* A spice of the devil.

† "Euker," "poker," and "seven up," are the fashionable games of cards.

"Hurraw, Jake, old coon, bear a hand, and let the squaw put them tails in the pot; for sun's down, and we'll have to put out pretty early to reach 'Black Tail' by this time to-morrow. Who's fust guard, boys? them cussed 'Rapahos' will be after the animals to-night, or I'm no judge of Injun sign. How many did you see, Maurice?"

"Enfant de Gârce, me see bout honderd, when I pass Squirrel Creek, one dam war-party, parceque, they no hosses, and have de lariats for steal des animaux. May be de Yutas in Bayou Salade."

"We'll be having trouble to-night, I'm thinking, if the devils are about. Whose band was it, Maurice?"

"Slim-Face—I see him ver close—is out; mais I think it White Wolf's."

"White Wolf, maybe, will lose his hair if he and his band knock round here too often. That Injun put me afoot when we was out on 'Sandy' that fall. This niggur owes him one, any how."

"H—'s full of White Wolves: go ahead, and roll out some of your doins across the plains that time."

"You seed sights that spree, eh, boy?"

"*Well*, we did. Some of em got their flints fixed this side of Pawnee Fork, and a heap of mule-meat went wolfing. Just by Little Arkansa we saw the first Injun. Me and young Somes was ahead for meat, and I had hobbled the old mule and was 'approaching' some goats,* when I see the critturs turn back their heads and jump right away for me. 'Hurraw, Dick!' I shouts, 'hyars brown-skin acomin,' and off I makes for the mule. The young greenhorn sees the goats runnin up to him, and not being up to Injun ways, blazes at the first and knocks him over. Jest then seven darned red heads top the bluff, and seven Pawnees come a-screechin upon us. I cuts the hobbles and jumps on the mule, and, when I looks back, there was Dick Somes ramming a ball down his gun like mad, and the Injuns flinging their arrows at him pretty smart, I tell you. 'Hurraw, Dick, mind your hair,' and I ups old Greaser and let one Injun 'have it,' as was going plum into the boy with his lance. *He* turned on his back handsome, and Dick gets the ball down at last, blazes away, and drops another. Then we charged on em, and they clears off like runnin cows; and I takes the hair off the heads of the two we made meat of; and I do b'lieve thar's some of them scalps on my old leggings yet.

"Well, Dick was as full of arrows as a porkypine: one was sticking right through his cheek, one in his meat-bag, and two more 'bout his hump-ribs. I tuk 'em all out slick, and away we go to camp, (for they was jost a-campin' when we went ahead) and carryin' the goat too. Thar' was a hurroo when we rode in with the scalps at the end of our guns. 'Injuns! Injuns!' was the cry from the greenhorns; 'we'll be 'tacked to-night, that's certain.'

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* Antelope are frequently called "goats" by the mountaineers.

"''Tacked be ——' says old Bill; 'aint we men too, and white at that? Look to your guns, boys; send out a strong hos'-guard with the animals, and keep your eyes skinned.'

"Well, as soon as the animals were unhitched from the waggons, the guvner sends out a strong guard, seven boys, and old hands at that. It was pretty nigh upon sundown, and Bill had just sung out to 'corral.' The boys were drivin' in the animals, and we were all standin' round to get 'em in slick, when, 'howgh-owgh-owgh-owgh,' we hears right behind the bluff, and 'bout a minute and a perfect crowd of Injuns gallops down upon the animals. Wagh! war'nt thar hoopin'! We jump for the guns, but before we get to the fires, the Injuns were among the cavayard. I saw Ned Collyer and his brother, who were in the hos'-guard, let drive at 'em; but twenty Pawnees were round 'em before the smoke cleared from their rifles, and when the crowd broke the two boys were on the ground, and their hair gone. Well, that ar Englishman just saved the cavayard. He had his horse, a regular buffalo-runner, picketed round the fire quite handy, and as soon as he sees the fix, he jumps upon her and rides right into the thick of the mules, and passes through 'em, firing his two-shoot gun at the Injuns, and, by Gor, he made two come. The mules, which was a snortin' with funk and running before the Injuns, as soon as they see the Engliaman's mare (mules 'ill go to h— after a horse, you all know), followed her right into the corral, and thar they was safe. Fifty Pawnees come screechin' after 'em, but we was ready that time, and the way we throw'd 'em was something handsome, I tell you. But three of the hos'-guard got skeared—leastwise their mules did, and carried 'em off into the peraira, and the Injuns having enough of *us*, dashed after 'em right away. Them poor devils looked back miserable now, with about a hundred red varmints tearin' after their hair, and whooping like mad. Young Jem Bulcher was the last; and when he seed it was no use, and his time was nigh, he throw'd himself off the mule, and standing as upright as a hickory wiping stick, he waves his hand to us, and blazes away at the first Injun as come up, and dropped him slick; but the moment after, you may guess, *he* died.

"We could do nothin', for, before our guns were loaded, all three were dead and their scalps gone. Five of our boys got rubbed out that time, and seven Injuns lay wolf's meat, while a many more went away gut-shot, I'll lay. How'sever, five of us went under, and the Pawnees made a raise of a dozen mules, wagh!"

Thus far, in his own words, we have accompanied the old hunter in his tale; and probably he would have taken us, by the time that the Squaw Chilipat had pronounced the beaver tails cooked, safely across the grand prairies—fording Cotton Wood, Turkey Creek, Little Arkansa, Walnut Creek, and Pawnee Fork—passed the fireless route of the Coon Creeks, through a sea of fat buffalo meat, without fuel to cook it; have struck the big river, and, leaving at the "Crossing" the waggons destined for Santa Fé, have trailed us up the Arkansa to Bent's Fort; thence up Boiling Spring, across the divide over to the southern fork of the Platte, away up to the Black Hills, and finally camped us, with hair still preserved, in the beaver-abounding valleys of the Sweet Water, and Câche la Poudre, under the rugged shadow of the Wind River mountains; if it had not so happened, at this juncture, as all our mountaineers sat cross-legged round the fire, pipe in mouth, and with Indian gravity listened to the yarn of the old trapper, interrupting him only with an occasional wagh! or with the exclamations of some participator in the events then under narration, who would every now and then put in a corroborative,—"This child remembers that fix," or, "hyar's a niggur lifted hair that spree," &c.—that a whizzing noise was heard in the air, followed by a sharp but suppressed cry from one of the hunters.

In an instant the mountaineers had sprung from their seats, and, seizing the ever-ready rifle, each one had thrown himself on the ground a few paces beyond the light of the fire (for it was now nightfall;) but not a word escaped them, as, lying close, with their keen eyes directed towards the gloom of the thicket, near which the camp was placed, with rifles cocked, they waited a renewal of the attack. Presently the leader of the band, no other than Killbuck, who had so lately been recounting some of his experiences across the plains, and than whom no more crafty woodsman or more expert trapper ever tracked a deer or grained a beaverskin, raised his tall, leather-clad form, and, placing his hand over his mouth, made the prairie ring with the wild protracted note of an Indian war-whoop. This was instantly repeated from the direction where the animals belonging to the camp were grazing, under the charge of the horse-guard. Three shrill whoops answered the warning of the leader, and showed that the guard was on the alert, and understood the signal. However, with the manifestation of their presence, the Indians appeared to be satisfied; or, what is more probable, the act of aggression had been committed by some daring young warrior, who, being out on his first expedition, desired to strike the first *coup*, and thus signalise himself at the outset of the campaign. After waiting some few minutes, expecting a renewal of the attack, the mountaineers in a body rose from the ground and made towards the animals, with which they presently returned to the camp; and, after carefully hobbling and securing them to pickets firmly driven into the ground, mounting an additional guard, and examining the neighbouring thicket, they once more assembled round the fire, relit their pipes, and puffed away the cheering weed as composedly as if no such being as a Redskin, thirsting for their lives, was within a thousand miles of their perilous encampment.

"If ever thar was bad Injuns on these plains," at last growled Killbuck, biting hard the pipe-stem between his teeth, "it's these Rapahos, and the meanest kind at that."

"Can't beat the Blackfeet, any how," chimed in one La Bonté, from the Yellow Stone country, a fine handsome specimen of a mountaineer. "However, one of you quit this arrow out of my hump," he continued, bending forwards to the fire, and exhibiting an arrow sticking out under his right shoulder-blade, and a stream of blood trickling down his buckskin coat from the wound

This his nearest neighbour essayed to do; but finding, after a tug, that it "would not come," expressed his opinion that the offending weapon would have to be "butchered" out. This was accordingly effected with the ready blade of a scalp-knife; and a handful of beaver-fur being placed on the wound, and secured by a strap of buckskin round the body, the wounded man donned his hunting-shirt once more, and coolly set about lighting his pipe, his rifle lying across his lap, cocked and ready for use.

It was now near midnight—dark and misty; and the clouds, rolling away to the eastward from the lofty ridges of the Rocky Mountains, were gradually obscuring the dim starlight. As the lighter vapours faded from the mountains, a thick black cloud succeeded them, and settled over the loftier peaks of the chain, faintly visible through the gloom of night, whilst a mass of fleecy scud soon overspread the whole sky. A hollow moaning sound crept through the valley, and the upper branches of the cotton woods, with their withered leaves, began to rustle with the first breath of the coming storm. Huge drops of rain fell at intervals, hissing as they dropped into the blazing fires, and pattering on the skins with which the hunters hurriedly covered the exposed baggage. The mules near the camp cropped the grass with quick and greedy bites round the circuit of their pickets, as if conscious that the storm would soon prevent their feeding, and already humped their backs as the chilling rain fell upon their flanks. The prairie wolves crept closer to the camp, and in the confusion that ensued from the hurry of the trappers to cover the perishable portions of their equipment, contrived more than once to dart off with a piece of meat, when their peculiar and mournful chiding would be heard as they fought for the possession of the ravished morsel.

When every thing was duly protected, the men set to work to spread their beds, those who had not troubled themselves to erect a shelter getting under the lee of the piles of packs and saddles; whilst Killbuck, disdaining even such care of his carcass, threw his buffalo robe on the bare ground, declaring his intention to "take" what was coming at all hazards, and "any how." Selecting a high spot, he drew his knife and proceeded to cut drains round it, to prevent the water running into him as he lay; then taking a single robe he carefully spread it, placing under the end farthest from the fire a large stone brought from the creek. Having satisfactorily adjusted this pillow, he added another robe to the one already laid, and placed over all a Navajo blanket, supposed to be impervious to rain. Then he divested himself of his pouch and powder-horn, which, with his rifle, he placed inside his bed, and quickly covered up lest the wet should reach them. Having performed these operations to his satisfaction, he lighted his pipe by the hissing embers of the half-extinguished fire (for by this time the rain poured in torrents), and went the rounds of the picketed animals, cautioning the guard round the camp to keep their "eyes skinned, for there would be 'powder burned' before morning." Then returning to the fire, and kicking with his mocassined foot the slumbering ashes, he squatted down before it, and thus soliloquised:—

"Thirty year have I been knocking about these mountains from Missoura's head as far sothe as the starving Gila. I've trapped a 'heap,'* and many a hundred pack of beaver I've traded in my time, wagh! What has come of it, and whar's the dollars as ought to be in my possibles? Whar's the ind of this, I say? Is a man to be hunted by Injuns all his days? Many's the time I've said I'd strike for Taos, and trap a squaw, for this child's getting old, and feels like wanting a woman's face about his lodge for the balance of his days; but when it comes to caching of the old traps, I've the smallest kind of heart, I have. Certain, the old state comes across my mind now and again, but who's thar to remember my old body? But them diggings gets too over crowded now-a-days, and its hard to fetch breath amongst them big bands of corncrackers to Missoura. Beside, it goes against natur to leave bufler meat and feed on hog; and them white gals are too much like picturs, and a deal too 'fofarraw' (fanfaron). No; darn the settlements, I say. It won't shine, and whar's the dollars? Howsever, beaver's 'bound to rise;' human natur can't go on selling beaver a dollar a pound; no, no, that arn't a going to shine much longer, I know. Them was the times when this child first went to the mountains: six dollars the plew—old 'un or kitten. Wagh! but its bound to rise, I says agin; and hyar's a coon knows whar to lay his hand on a dozen pack right handy, and then he'll take the Taos trail, wagh!"

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* An Indian is always a "heap" hungry or thirsty—loves a "heap"—is a "heap" brave—in fact, "heap" is tantamount to very much.

Thus soliloquising, Killbuck knocked the ashes from his pipe, and placed it in the gaily ornamented case that hung round his neck, drew his knife-belt a couple of holes tighter, resumed his pouch and powder-horn, took his rifle, which he carefully covered with the folds of his Navajo blanket, and striding into the darkness, cautiously reconnoitred the vicinity of the camp. When he returned to the fire he sat himself down as before, but this time with his rifle across his lap; and at intervals his keen gray eye glanced piercingly around, particularly towards an old, weatherbeaten, and grizzled mule, who now, old stager as she was, having filled her belly, stood lazily over her picket pin, with her head bent down and her long ears flapping over her face, her limbs gathered under her, and her back arched to throw off the rain, tottering from side to side as she rested and slept.

"Yep, old gal!" cried Killbuck to the animal, at the same time picking a piece of burnt wood from the fire and throwing it at her, at which the mule gathered itself up and cocked her ears as she recognised her master's voice. "Yep, old gal! and keep your nose open; thar's brown skin about, I'm thinkin', and maybe you'll get 'roped' (lasso'd) by a Rapaho afore mornin." Again the old trapper settled himself before the fire; and soon his head began to nod, as drowsiness stole over him. Already he was in the land of dreams; revelling amongst bands of "fat cow," or hunting along a stream well peopled with beaver; with no Indian "sign" to disturb him, and the merry rendezvous in close perspective, and his peltry selling briskly at six dollars the plew, and galore of alcohol to ratify the trade. Or, perhaps, threading the back trail of his memory, he passed rapidly through the perilous vicissitudes of his hard, hard life—starving one day, revelling in abundance the next; now beset by whooping savages thirsting for his blood, baying his enemies like the hunted deer, but with the unflinching courage of a man; now, all care thrown aside, secure and forgetful of the past, a welcome guest in the hospitable trading fort; or back, as the trail gets fainter, to his childhood's home in the brown forests of old Kentuck, tended and cared for—his only thought to enjoy the hominy and johnny cakes of his thrifty mother. Once more, in warm and well remembered homespun, he sits on the snake fence round the old clearing, and munching his hoe-cake at set of sun, listens to the mournful note of the whip-poor-will, or the harsh cry of the noisy catbird, or watches the agile gambols of the squirrels as they chase each other, chattering the while, from branch to branch of the lofty tamarisks, wondering how long it will be before he will be able to lift his father's heavy rifle, and use it against the tempting game. Sleep, however, sat lightly on the eyes of the wary mountaineer, and a snort from the old mule in an instant stretched his every nerve. Without a movement of his body, his keen eye fixed itself upon the mule, which now stood with head bent round, and eyes and ears pointed in one direction, snuffing the night air and snorting with apparent fear. A low sound from the wakeful hunter roused the others from their sleep; and raising their bodies from their well-soaked beds, a single word apprised them of their danger.

"Injuns!"

Scarcely was the word out of Killbuck's lips, when, above the howling of the furious wind, and the pattering of the rain, a hundred savage yells broke suddenly upon their ears from all directions round the camp; a score of rifle-shots rattled from the thicket, and a cloud of arrows whistled through the air, whilst a crowd of Indians charged upon the picketed animals. "Owgh, owgh—owgh—owgh—g-h-h." "A foot, by gor!" shouted Killbuck, "and the old mule gone at that. On 'em, boys, for old Kentuck!" And he rushed towards his mule, which jumped and snorted mad with fright, as a naked Indian strove to fasten a lariat round her nose, having already cut the rope which fastened her to the picket-pin.

"Quit that, you cussed devil!" roared the trapper, as he jumped upon the savage, and without raising his rifle to his shoulder, made a deliberate thrust with the muzzle at his naked breast, striking him full, and at the same time pulling the trigger,

actually driving the Indian two paces backwards with the shock, when he fell in a heap, and dead. But at the same moment, an Indian, sweeping his club round his head, brought it with fatal force down upon Killbuck; for a moment the hunter staggered, threw out his arms wildly into the air, and fell headlong to the ground.

"Owgh! owgh, owgh-h-h!" cried the Rapaho, and, striding over the prostrate body, he seized with his left hand the middle lock of the trapper's long hair, and drew his knife round the head to separate the scalp from the skull. As he bent over to his work, the trapper named La Bonté saw his companion's peril, rushed quick as thought at the Indian, and buried his knife to the hilt between his shoulders. With a gasping shudder the Rapaho fell dead upon the prostrate body of his foe.

The attack, however, lasted but a few seconds. The dash at the animals had been entirely successful, and, driving them before them, with loud cries, the Indians disappeared quickly in the darkness. Without waiting for daylight, two of the three trappers who alone were to be seen, and who had been within the shanties at the time of attack, without a moment's delay commenced packing two horses, which having been fastened to the shanties had escaped the Indians, and placing their squaws upon them, showering curses and imprecations on their enemies, left the camp, fearful of another onset, and resolved to retreat and câche themselves until the danger was over. Not so La Bonté, who, stout and true, had done his best in the fight, and now sought the body of his old comrade, from which, before he could examine the wounds, he had first to remove the corpse of the Indian he had slain. Killbuck still breathed. He had been stunned; but, revived by the cold rain beating upon his face, he soon opened his eyes, and recognised his trusty friend, who, sitting down, lifted his head into his lap, and wiped away the blood that streamed from the wounded scalp.

"Is the top-knot gone, boy?" asked Killbuck; "for my head feels queersome, I tell you."

"Thar's the Injun as felt like lifting it," answered the other, kicking the dead body with his foot.

"Wagh! boy, you've struck a coup; so scalp the nigger right off, and then fetch me a drink."

The morning broke clear and cold. With the exception of a light cloud which hung over Pike's Peak, the sky was spotless; and a perfect calm had succeeded the boisterous storm of the previous night. The creek was swollen and turbid with the rains; and as La Bonté proceeded a little distance down the bank to find a passage to the water, he suddenly stopped short, and an involuntary cry escaped him. Within a few feet of the bank lay the body of one of his companions, who had formed the guard at the time of the Indians' attack. It was lying on the face, pierced through the chest with an arrow which was buried to the very feathers, and the scalp torn from the bloody skull. Beyond, but all within a hundred yards, lay the three others, dead, and similarly mutilated. So certain had been the aim, and so close the enemy, that each had died without a struggle, and consequently had been unable to alarm the camp. La Bonté, with a glance at the bank, saw at once that the wily Indians had crept along the creek, the noise of the storm facilitating their approach undiscovered, and crawling up the bank, had watched their opportunity to shoot simultaneously the four hunters on guard.

Returning to Killbuck, he apprised him of the melancholy fate of their companions, and held a council of war as to their proceedings. The old hunter's mind was soon made up. "First," said he, "I get back my old mule; she's carried me and my traps these twelve years, and I aint a goin' to lose her yet. Second, I feel like taking hair, and some Rapahos has to 'go under' for this night's work. Third, We have got to câche the beaver. Fourth, We take the Injun trail, wharever it leads."

No more daring mountaineer than La Bonté ever trapped a beaver, and no counsel could have more exactly tallied with his own inclination than the law laid down by old Killbuck.

"Agreed," was his answer, and forthwith he set about forming a câche. In this instance they had not sufficient time to construct a regular one, so they contented themselves with securing their packs of beaver in buffalo robes, and tying them in the forks of several cotton-woods, under which the camp had been made. This done, they lit a fire, and cooked some buffalo meat; and, whilst smoking a pipe, carefully cleaned their rifles, and filled their horns and pouches with good store of ammunition.

A prominent feature in the character of the hunters of the far west is their quick determination and resolve in cases of extreme difficulty and peril, and their fixedness of purpose, when any plan of operations has been laid requiring bold and instant action in carrying out. It is here that they so infinitely surpass the savage Indian, in bringing to a successful issue their numerous hostile expeditions against the natural foe of the white man in the wild and barbarous regions of the west. Ready to resolve as they are prompt to execute, and combining far greater dash and daring with equal subtlety and caution, they possess great advantage over the vacillating Indian, whose superstitious mind in a great degree paralyses the physical energy of his active body; and who, by waiting for propitious signs and seasons before he undertakes an enterprise, often loses the opportunity by which his white and more civilised enemy knows so well how to profit.

Killbuck and La Bonté were no exceptions to this characteristic rule; and before the sun was a hand's-breadth above the eastern horizon, the two hunters were running on the trail of the victorious Indians. Striking from the creek where the night attack was made, they crossed to another known as Kioway, running parallel to Bijou, a few hours' journey westward, and likewise heading in the "divide." Following this to its forks, they struck into the upland prairies lying at the foot of the mountains; and crossing to the numerous water-courses which feed the creek called "Vermillion" or "Cherry," they pursued the trail over the mountain-spurs until it reached a fork of the Boiling Spring. Here the war-party had halted and held a consultation, for from this point the trail turned at a tangent to the westward, and entered the rugged gorges of the mountains. It was now evident to the two trappers that their destination was the Bayou Salade,—a mountain valley which is a favourite resort of the buffalo in the winter season, and which, and for this reason, is often frequented by the Yuta Indians as their wintering ground. That the Rapahos were on a war expedition against the Yutas, there was little doubt; and Killbuck, who knew every inch of the ground, saw at once, by the direction the trail had taken, that they were making for the Bayou in order to surprise their enemies, and, therefore, were not following the usual Indian trail up the canon of the Boiling Spring River. Having made up his mind to this, he at once struck across the broken ground lying at the foot of the mountains, steering a course a little to the eastward of north, or almost in the direction whence he had come: and then, pointing westward, about noon he crossed a mountain chain, and descending into a ravine through which a little rivulet tumbled over its rocky bed, he at once proved the correctness of his judgment by striking the Indian trail, now quite fresh, as it wound through the canon along the bank of the stream. The route he had followed, impracticable to pack-animals, had saved at least half-a-day's journey, and brought them within a short distance of the object of their pursuit; for, at the head of the gorge, a lofty bluff presenting itself, the hunters ascended to the summit, and, looking down, descried at their very feet the Indian camp, with their own stolen cavallada feeding quietly round.

"Wagh!" exclaimed both the hunters in a breath. "And thar's the old ga'l at that," chuckled Killbuck, as he recognised his old grizzled mule making good play at the rich buffalo grass with which these mountain valleys abound.

"If we don't make 'a raise' afore long, I wouldn't say so. Thar plans is plain to this child as beaver sign. They're after Yuta hair, as certain as this gun has got hind-sights; but they ar'nt agoin' to pack them animals after 'em, and have crawled like 'rattlers' along this bottom to câche 'em till they come back from the Bayou,—and maybe they'll leave half a dozen 'soldiers'* with 'em."

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* The young untried warriors of the Indians are thus called.

How right the wily trapper was in his conjectures will be shortly proved. Meanwhile, with his companion, he descended the bluff, and pushing his way into a thicket of dwarf pine and cedar, sat down on a log, and drew from an end of the blanket, strapped on his shoulder, a portion of a buffalo's liver, which they both discussed, *raw*, with infinite relish; eating in lieu of bread (an unknown luxury in these parts) sundry strips of dried fat. To have kindled a fire would have been dangerous, since it was not impossible that some of the Indians might leave their camp to hunt, when the smoke would at once have betrayed the presence of enemies. A light was struck, however for their pipes, and after enjoying this true consolation for some time, they laid a blanket on the ground, and, side by side, soon fell asleep.

If Killbuck had been a prophet, or the most prescient of "medicine men," he could not have more exactly predicted the movements in the Indian camp. About three hours before "sun-down," he rose and shook himself, which movement was sufficient to awaken his companion. Telling La Bonté to lie down again and rest, he gave him to understand that he was about to reconnoitre the enemy's camp; and after carefully examining his rifle, and drawing his knife-belt a hole or two tighter, he proceeded on his dangerous errand. Ascending the same bluff whence he had first discovered the Indian camp, he glanced rapidly around, and made himself master of the features of the ground—choosing a ravine by which he might approach the camp more closely, and without danger of being discovered. This was soon effected; and in half an hour the trapper was lying on his belly on the summit of a pine-covered bluff, which overlooked the Indians within easy rifle-shot, and so perfectly concealed by the low spreading branches of the cedar and arbor-vitæ, that not a particle of his person could be detected; unless, indeed, his sharp twinkling gray eye contrasted too strongly with the green boughs that covered the rest of his face. Moreover, there was no danger of their hitting upon his trail, for he had been careful to pick his steps on the rock-covered ground, so that not a track of his moccasin was visible. Here he lay, still as a carcagien in wait for a deer, only now and then shaking the boughs as his body quivered with a suppressed chuckle, when any movement in the Indian camp caused him to laugh inwardly at his (if they had known it) unwelcome propinquity. He was not a little surprised, however, to discover that the party was much smaller than he had imagined, counting only forty warriors; and this assured him that the band had divided, one half taking the Yuta trail by the Boiling Spring, the other (the one before him) taking a longer circuit in order to reach the Bayou, and make the attack on the Yutas in a different direction.

At this moment the Indians were in deliberation. Seated in a large circle round a very small fire,* the smoke from which ascended in a thin straight column, they each in turn puffed a huge cloud of smoke from three or four long cherry-stemmed pipes, which went the round of the party; each warrior touching the ground with the heel of the pipe-bowl, and turning the stem upwards and away from him as "medicine" to the Great Spirit, before he himself inhaled the fragrant kinnik-kinnik. The council, however, was not general, for only fifteen of the older warriors took part in it, the others sitting outside and at some little distance from the circle. Behind each were his arms—bow and quiver, and shield hanging from a spear stuck in the ground, and a few guns in ornamented covers of buckskin were added to some of the equipments.

Near the fire, and in the centre of the inner circle, a spear was fixed upright in the ground, and on this dangled the four scalps of the trappers killed the preceding night; and underneath them, affixed to the same spear, was the mystic "medicine bag," by which Killbuck knew that the band before him was under the command of the chief of the tribe.

Towards the grim trophies on the spear, the warriors, who in turn addressed the council, frequently pointed—more than one, as he did so, making the gyratory motion of the right hand and arm, which the Indians use in describing that they have gained an advantage by skill or cunning. Then pointing westward, the speaker would thrust out his arm, extending his fingers at the same time, and closing and reopening them repeatedly, meaning, that although four scalps already ornamented the "medicine" pole, they were as nothing compared to the numerous trophies they would bring from the Salt Valley, where they expected to find their hereditary enemies the Yutas. "That now was not the time to count their coups," (for at this moment one of the warriors rose from his seat, and, swelling with pride, advanced towards the spear, pointing to one of the scalps, and then striking his open hand on his naked breast, jumped into the air, as if about to go through the ceremony). "That before many suns all their spears together would not hold the scalps they had taken, and that they would return to their village and spend a moon relating their achievements, and counting coups."

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* There is a great difference between an Indian's fire and a white's. The former places the ends of logs to burn gradually; the latter, the centre, besides making such a bonfire that the Indians truly say, "The white makes a fire so hot that he cannot approach to warm himself by it."

All this Killbuck learned: thanks to his knowledge of the language of signs—a master of which, if even he have no ears or tongue, never fails to understand, and be understood by, any of the hundred tribes whose languages are perfectly distinct and different. He learned, moreover, that at sundown the greater part of the band would resume the trail, in order to reach the Bayou by the earliest dawn; and also, that no more than four or five of the younger warriors would remain with the captured animals. Still the hunter remained in his position until the sun had disappeared behind the ridge; when, taking up their arms, and throwing their buffalo robes on their shoulders, the war party of Rapahos, one behind the other, with noiseless step, and silent as the dumb, moved away from the camp. When the last dusky form had disappeared behind a point of rocks which shut in the northern end of the little valley or ravine, Killbuck withdrew his head from its screen, crawled backwards on his stomach from the edge of the bluff, and, rising from the ground, shook and stretched himself; then gave one cautious look around, and immediately proceeded to rejoin his companion.

"*Lave* (get up), boy," said Killbuck, as soon as he reached him. "Hyar's grainin' to do afore long—and sun 's about down, I'm thinking."

"Ready, old hos," answered La Bonté, giving himself a shake. "What's the sign like, and how many's the lodge?"

"Fresh, and five, boy. How do you feel?"

"*Half froze for hair.* Wagh!"

"We'll have moon to-night, and as soon as *she* gets up, we'll make 'em 'come.'"

Killbuck then described to his companion what he had seen, and detailed his plan. This was simply to wait until the moon afforded sufficient light, then to approach the Indian camp and charge into it, "lift" as much "hair" as they could, recover their animals, and start at once to the Bayou and join the friendly Yutas, warning them of the coming danger. The risk of falling in with either of the Rapaho bands was hardly considered; to avoid this, they trusted to their own foresight, and the legs of their mules, should they encounter them

Between sundown and the rising of the moon, they had leisure to eat their supper, which, as before, consisted of raw buffalo-liver; after discussing which, Killbuck pronounced himself "a 'heap' better," and ready for "huggin."

In the short interval of almost perfect darkness which preceded the moonlight, and taking advantage of one of the frequent squalls of wind which howl down the narrow gorges of the mountains, these two determined men, with footsteps noiseless as the panther's, crawled to the edge of the little plateau of some hundred yards' square, where the five Indians in charge of the animals were seated round the fire, perfectly unconscious of the vicinity of danger. Several clumps of cedar bushes dotted the small prairie, and amongst these the well-hobbled mules and horses were feeding. These animals, accustomed to the presence of whites, would not notice the two hunters as they crept from clump to clump nearer to the fire, and also served, even if the Indians should be on the watch, to conceal their movements from them.

This the two men at once perceived; but old Killbuck knew that if he passed within sight or smell of his mule, he would be received with a hinny of recognition, which would at once alarm the enemy. He therefore first ascertained where his own animal was feeding, which luckily was at the farther side of the prairie, and would not interfere with his proceedings.

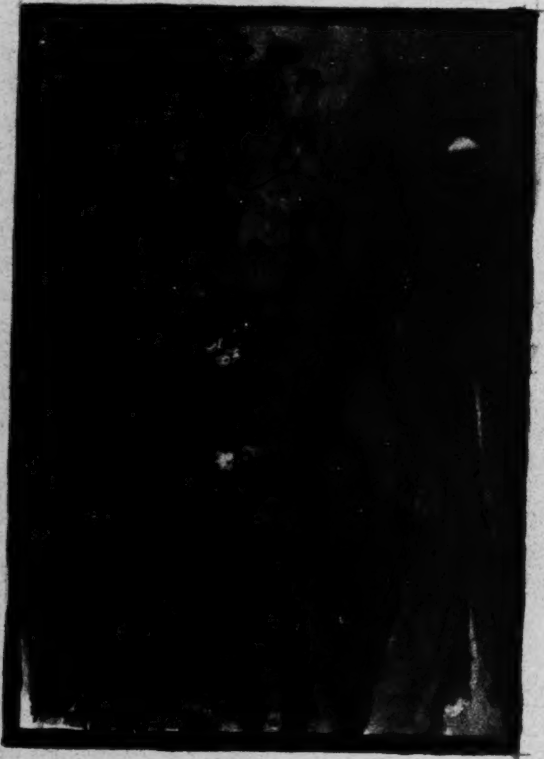
Threading their way amongst the feeding mules, they approached a clump of bushes about forty yards from the spot where the unconscious savages were seated smoking round the fire; and here they awaited, scarcely drawing breath the while, the moment when the moon rose above the mountain into the clear cold sky, and gave them light sufficient to make sure their work of bloody retribution. Not a pulsation in the hearts of these stern determined men beat higher than its wont; not the tremour of a nerve disturbed their frame. They stood with lips compressed and rifles ready, their pistols loosened in their belts, their scalp-knives handy to their gripe. The lurid glow of the coming moon already shot into the sky above the ridge, which stood out in bold relief against the light; and the luminary herself just peered over the mountain, illuminating its pine-clad summit, and throwing her beams on an opposite peak, when Killbuck touched his companion's arm, and whispered, "Wait for the full light, boy."

At this moment, however, unseen by the trapper, the old grizzled mule had gradually approached, as she fed along the plateau; and, when within a few paces of their retreat, a gleam of moonshine revealed to the animal the erect forms of the two whites. Suddenly she stood still and pricked her ears, and stretching out her neck and nose, snuffed the air. Well she knew her old master.

Killbuck, with eyes fixed upon the Indians, was on the point of giving the signal of attack to his comrade, when the shrill hinny of his mule reverberated through the gorge. The Indians jumped to their feet and seized their arms, when Killbuck, with a loud shout of "At 'em boy; give the niggurs h—!" rushed from his concealment, and with La Bonté by his side, yelling a fierce war-whoop, sprung upon the startled savages.

Panic-struck with the suddenness of the attack, the Indians scarcely knew where to run, and for a moment stood huddled together like sheep. Down dropped Killbuck on his knee, and stretching out his wiping-stick, planted it on the ground at the extreme length of his arm. As methodically and as coolly as if about to aim at a deer, he raised his rifle to this rest and pulled the trigger. At the report an Indian fell forward on his face, at the same moment that La Bonté, with equal certainty of aim and like effect, discharged his own rifle.

The three surviving Indians, seeing that their assailants were but two, and knowing that their guns were empty, came on with loud yells. With the left hand grasping a bunch of arrows, and holding the bow already bent and arrow fixed, they



steadily advanced, bending low to the ground to get their objects between them and the light, and thus render their aim more certain. The trappers, however, did not care to wait for them. Drawing their pistols, they charged at once; and although the bows twanged, and the three arrows struck their mark, on they rushed, discharging their pistols at close quarters. La Bonté threw his empty one at the head of an Indian who was pulling his second arrow to its head at a yard's distance, drew his knife at the same moment, and made at him.

But the Indian broke and ran, followed by his surviving companion; and as soon as Killbuck could ram home another ball, he sent a shot flying after them as they scrambled up the mountain side, leaving in their fright and hurry their bows and shields on the ground.

The fight was over, and the two trappers confronted each other:—"We've given 'em h—!" laughed Killbuck.

"*Well*, we have," answered the other, pulling an arrow out of his arm.—"Wagh!"

"We'll lift the hair, any how," continued the first, "afore the scalp's cold."

Taking his whetstone from the little sheath on his knife-belt, the trapper proceeded to "edge" his knife, and then stepping to the first prostrate body, he turned it over to examine if any symptom of vitality remained. "Thrown cold!" he exclaimed, as he dropped the lifeless arm he had lifted.

"I sighted him about the long ribs, but the light was bad, and I couldn't get a 'bead' 'off hand' any how."

Seizing with his left hand the long and braided lock on the centre of the Indian's head, he passed the point edge of his keen butcher-knife round the parting, turning it at the same time under the skin to separate the scalp from the skull; then, with a quick and sudden jerk of his hand, he removed it entirely from the head, and giving the reeking trophy a wring upon the grass to free it from the blood, he coolly hitched it under his belt, and proceeded to the next; but seeing La Bonté operating upon this, he sought the third, who lay some little distance from the others. This one was still alive, a pistol-ball having passed through his body, without touching a vital spot.

"Gut-shot is this niggur," exclaimed the trapper; "them pistols never throws 'em in their tracks;" and thrusting his knife, for mercy's sake, into the bosom of the Indian, he likewise tore the scalp-lock from his head, and placed it with the other.

La Bonté had received two trivial wounds, and Killbuck till now had been walking about with an arrow sticking through the fleshy part of his thigh, the point being perceptible near the surface of the other side. To free his leg from the painful encumbrance, he thrust the weapon completely through, and then, cutting off the arrow-head below the barb, he drew it out, the blood flowing freely from the wound. A tourniquet of buckskin soon stopped this, and, heedless of the pain, the hardy mountaineer sought for his old mule, and quickly brought it to the fire (which La Bonté had rekindled), lavishing many a caress, and most comical terms of endearment, upon the faithful companion of his wanderings. They found all the animals safe and well; and after eating heartily of some venison which the Indians had been cooking at the moment of the attack, made instant preparations to quit the scene of their exploit, not wishing to trust to the chance of the Rapahos being too frightened to again molest them.

Having no saddles, they secured buffalo robes on the backs of two mules—Killbuck, of course, riding his own—and lost no time in proceeding on their way. They followed the course of the Indians up the stream, and found that it kept the cañons and gorges of the mountains, where the road was better; but it was with no little difficulty that they made their way, the ground being much broken, and covered with rocks. Killbuck's wound became very painful, and his leg stiffened and swelled distressingly, but he still pushed on all night, and, at daybreak, recognising their position, he left the Indian trail, and followed a little creek which rose in a mountain chain of moderate elevation, and above which, and to the south, Pike's Peak towered high into the clouds. With great difficulty they crossed this ridge, and ascending and descending several smaller ones, which gradually smoothed away as they met the valley, about three hours after sunrise they found themselves in the south-east corner of the Bayou Salade.

The Bayou Salade, or Salt Valley, is the most southern of three very extensive valleys, forming a series of table-lands in the very centre of the main chain of the Rocky Mountains, known to the trappers by the name of the "Parks." The numerous streams by which they are watered abound in the valuable fur-bearing beaver, whilst every species of game common to the west is found here in great abundance. The Bayou Salade especially, owing to the salitrose nature of the soil and springs, is the favourite resort of all the larger animals common to the mountains; and, in the sheltered prairies of the Bayou, the buffalo, forsaking the barren and inclement regions of the exposed plains, frequent these upland valleys, in the winter-months; and feeding upon the rich and nutritious buffalo grass which, on the bare prairies, at that season, is either dry and rotten, or entirely exhausted, not only sustain life, but retain a great portion of the "condition" that the abundant fall and summer pasture of the lowlands has laid upon their bones. Therefore is this valley sought by the Indians as a wintering ground. Its occupancy has been disputed by most of the mountain tribes, and long and bloody wars have been waged to make good the claims set forth by Yuta, Rapaho, Sioux, and Shians. However, to the first of these it may be said now to belong, since their "big village" has wintered there for many successive years; whilst the Rapahos seldom visit it unless on war expeditions against the Yutas.

Judging, from the direction the Rapahos were taking, that the friendly tribe of Yutas were there already, the trappers had resolved to join them as soon as possible; and therefore, without resting, pushed on through the uplands, and, towards the middle of the day, had the satisfaction of descrying the conical lodges of the village, situated on a large level plateau, through which ran a mountain stream. A numerous band of mules and horses were scattered over the pasture, and round them several mounted Indians kept guard. As the trappers descended the bluffs into the plain, some straggling Indians caught sight of them; and instantly one of them, lassoing a horse from the herd, mounted it, barebacked, and flew like wind to the village to spread the news. Soon the lodges disgorged their inmates; first the women and children rushed to the side of the strangers' approach; then the younger Indians, unable to restrain their curiosity, mounted their horses, and galloped forth to meet them. The old chiefs, enveloped in buffalo robes (softly and delicately dressed as the Yutas alone know how), and with tomahawk held in one hand and resting in the hollow of the other arm, sallied last of all from their lodges, and, squatting in a row on a sunny bank outside the village, awaited, with dignified composure, the arrival of the whites. Killbuck was well known to most of them, having trapped in their country and traded with them years before at Roubideau's fort at the head waters of the Rio Grande. After shaking hands with all who presented themselves, he at once gave them to understand that their enemies, the Rapahos, were at hand, with a hundred warriors at least, elated by the coup they had just struck against the whites, bringing, moreover, four white scalps to incite them to brave deeds.

At this news the whole village was speedily in commotion: the war-shout was taken up from lodge to lodge; the squaws began to lament and tear their hair; the warriors to paint and arm themselves. The elder chiefs immediately met in council, and, over the medicine-pipe, debated as to the best course to pursue,—whether to wait the attack, or sally out and meet the enemy. In the mean time, the braves were collected together by the chiefs of their respective bands, and scouts, mounted on the fastest horses, despatched in every direction to procure intelligence of the enemy.

The two whites, after watering their mules and picketing them in some good grass near the village, drew near the council fire, without, however, joining in the "talk," until they were invited to take their seats by the eldest chief. Then Killbuck was called upon to give his opinion as to the direction in which he judged the Rapahos to be approaching, which he delivered in their own language, with which he was well acquainted. In a short time the council broke up, and, without noise or confusion, a band of one hundred chosen warriors left the village, immediately after one of the scouts had galloped in and communicated some intelligence to the chiefs. Killbuck and La Bonté volunteered to accompany the war-party, weak and exhausted as they were; but this was negatived by the chiefs, who left their white brothers to the care of the women, who tended their wounds, now stiff and painful: and spreading their buffalo robes in a warm and roomy lodge, left them to the repose they so much needed.

CHAPTER II.

The next morning, Killbuck's leg was greatly inflamed, and he was unable to leave the lodge; but he made his companion bring the old mule to the door, that he might give her a couple of ears of Indian corn, the last remains of the slender store brought by the Indians from the Navajo country. The day passed, and sundown brought no tidings of the war-party. This caused no little wailing on the part of the squaws, but was interpreted by the whites as a favourable augury. A little after sunrise, on the second morning, the long line of the returning warriors was discerned winding over the prairie, and a scout having galloped in to bring the news of a great victory, the whole village was soon in a ferment of paint and drumming. A short distance from the lodges, the warriors halted to await the approach of the people. Old men, children, and squaws sitting astride their horses, sallied out to escort the victorious party in triumph to the village. With loud shouts and songs, and drums beating the monotonous Indian time, they advanced and encircled the returning braves, one of whom, his face covered with black paint, carried a pole on which dangled thirteen scalps, the trophies of the expedition. As he lifted these on high, they were saluted with deafening whoops and cries of exultation and savage joy. In this manner they entered the village, almost before the friends of those fallen in the fight had ascertained their losses. Then the shouts of delight were converted into yells of grief; the mothers and wives of those braves who had been killed (and seven had "gone under") presently returned with their faces, necks, and hands blackened, and danced and howled round the scalp-pole, which had been deposited in the centre of the village, in front of the lodge of the great chief.

Killbuck now learned that a scout having brought intelligence that the two bands of Rapahos were hastening to form a junction, as soon as they learned that their approach was discovered, the Yutas had successfully prevented it; and attacking one party, had entirely defeated it, killing thirteen of the Rapaho braves. The other party had fled on seeing the issue of the fight, and a few of the Yuta warriors were now pursuing them.

To celebrate so signal a victory, great preparations sounded their notes through the village. Paints, —vermilion and ochres—red and yellow,—were in great request; whilst the scrapings of charred wood, mixed with gunpowder, were used as substitute for black, the medicine colour.

The lodges of the village, numbering some two hundred or more, were erected in parallel lines, and covered a large space of the level prairie in shape of a parallelogram. In the centre, however, the space which half a dozen lodges in length would have taken up was left unoccupied, save by one large one, of red-painted buffalo skins, tatooed with the mystic totems of the "medicine" peculiar to the nation. In front of this stood the grim scalp-pole, like a decayed tree trunk, its bloody fruit tossing in the wind; and on another pole, at a few feet distance, was hung the "bag" with its mysterious contents. Before each lodge a tripod of spears supported the arms and shields of the Yuta chivalry, and on many of them, smoke-dried scalps rattled in the wind, former trophies of the dusky knights who were arming themselves within. Heraldic devices were not wanting,—not, however, graved upon the shield, but hanging from the spear-head, the actual "totem" of the warrior it distinguished. The rattlesnake, the otter, the carcagien, the mountain badger, the war-eagle, the kon-qua-kish, the porcupine, the fox, &c., dangled their well-stuffed skins, displaying the guardian "medicine" of the warriors they pertained to, and representing the mental and corporeal qualities which were supposed to characterise the braves to whom they belonged.

From the centre lodge, two or three "medicine men," fantastically attired in the skins of wolves and bears, and bearing long peeled wands of cherry in their hands, occasionally emerged to tend a very small fire which they had kindled in the centre of the open space; and, when a thin column of smoke arose, one of them planted the scalp-pole obliquely across the fire. Squaws in robes of white dressed buckskin, garnished with beads and porcupines' quills, and their faces painted bright red and black, then appeared. These ranged themselves round the outside of the square, the boys and children of all ages, mounted on bare-backed horses, galloping round and round, and screaming with eagerness, excitement, and curiosity.

Presently the braves and warriors made their appearance, and squatted round the fire in two circles, those who had been engaged on the expedition being in the first or smaller one. One medicine man sat under the scalp-pole, having a drum between his knees, which he tapped at intervals with his hand, eliciting from the instrument a hollow monotonous sound. A bevy of women, shoulder to shoulder, then advanced from the four sides of the square, and some, shaking a rattle-drum in time with their steps, commenced a jumping jerking dance, now lifting one foot from the ground, and now rising with both, accompanying the dance with a chant, which swelled from a low whisper to the utmost extent of their voices—now dying away, and again bursting into vociferous measure. Thus they advanced to the centre and retreated to their former positions; when six squaws, with their faces painted a dead black, made their appearance from the crowd, chanting, in soft and sweet measure, a lament for the braves the nation had lost in the late battle: but soon as they drew near the scalp-pole, their melancholy note changed to the music (to them) of gratified revenge. In a succession of jumps, raising the feet alternately but a little distance from the ground, they made their way, through an interval left in the circle of warriors, to the grim pole, and encircling it, danced in perfect silence round it for a few moments. Then they burst forth with an extempore song, laudatory of the achievements of their victorious braves. They addressed the scalps as "sisters" (to be called a squaw is the greatest insult that can be offered to an Indian), and, spitting at them, upbraided them with their rashness in leaving their lodges to seek for Yuta husbands; "that the Yuta warriors and young men despised them, and chastised them for their forwardness and presumption, bringing back their scalps to their own women."

After sufficiently proving that they had any thing but lost the use of their tongues, but possessed, on the contrary, as fair a length of that formidable weapon as any of their sex, they withdrew, and left the field in undisputed possession of the men: who, accompanied by tap of drum, and by the noise of many rattles, broke out into a war-song, in which their own valour was by no means hidden in a bushel, or modestly refused the light of day. After this came the more interesting ceremony of a warrior "counting his coups."

A young brave, with his face painted black, mounted on a white horse mysteriously marked with red clay, and naked to the breech-clout, holding in his hand a long taper lance, rode into the circle, and paced slowly round it; then, flourishing his spear on high, he darted to the scalp-pole, round which the warriors were now seated in a semicircle; and in a loud voice, and with furious gesticulations, related his exploits, the drums tapping at the conclusion of each. On his spear hung seven scalps, and holding it vertically above his head, and commencing with the top one, he told the feats in which he had raised the trophy hair. When he had run through these, the drums tapped loudly, and several of the old chiefs shook their rattles, in corroboration of the truth of his achievements. The brave, swelling with pride, then pointed to the fresh and bloody scalps hanging on the pole. Two of these had been torn from the heads of Rapahos struck by his own hand, and this feat, *the* exploit of the day, had entitled him to the honour of counting his coups. Then, sticking his spear into the ground by the side of the pole, he struck his hand twice on his brawny and naked chest, turned short round, and, swift as the antelope, galloped into the plain: as if overcome by the shock his modesty had received in being obliged to recount his own high-sounding deeds.

"Wagh!" exclaimed old Killbuck, as he left the circle, pointing his pipe-stem towards the fast-fading figure of the brave, "that Injun's heart's about as big as ever it will be, I'm thinking."

With the Yutas, Killbuck and La Bonté remained during the winter; and when the spring sun had opened the ice-bound creeks, and melted the snow on the mountains, and its genial warmth had expanded the earth and permitted the roots of the grass to "live" once more, and throw out green and tender shoots, the two trappers bade adieu to the hospitable Indians, who broke up their village in order to start for the valleys of the Del Norte. As they followed the trail from the bayou, at sundown, just as they thought of camping, they observed ahead of them a solitary horseman riding along, followed by three mules. His hunting-frock of fringed buckskin, and the rifle resting across the horn of his saddle, at once proclaimed him white; but as he saw the mountaineers winding through the cañon, driving before them half a dozen horses, *he* judged they might possibly be Indians and enemies, the more so as their dress was not the usual costume of the whites. The trappers, therefore, saw the stranger raise the rifle in the hollow of his arm, and, gathering up his horse, ride steadily to meet them, as soon as he observed they were but two; two to one in mountain calculation being scarcely considered odds, if red skin to white.

However, on nearing them, the stranger discovered his mistake; and, throwing his rifle across

the saddle once more, reined in his horse and waited their approach; for the spot where he then stood presented an excellent camping-ground, with abundance of dry wood and convenient water.

"Where from, stranger?"

"The divide, and to the bayou for meat; and you are from there, I see. Any buffalo come in yet?"

"Heap, and seal-fat at that. What's the sign out on the plains?"

"War-party of Rapahos passed Squirrel at sundown yesterday, and nearly raised my animals. Sign, too, of more on left fork of Boiling Spring. No buffalo between this and Bijou. Do you feel like camping?"

"*Well*, we do. But whar's your companyeros?"

"I'm alone."

"Alone! Wagh! how do you get your animals along?"

"I go ahead, and they follow the horse."

"Well, that beats all! That's a smart-looking hos now; and runs some, I'm thinking."

"Well, it does."

"Whar's them mules from? They look like Californy."

"Mexican country—away down south."

"H—! Whar's yourself from?"

"There away, too."

"What's beaver worth in Taos?"

"Dollar."

"In Saint Louiy?"

"Same."

"H—! Any call for buckskin?"

"A heap! The soldiers in Santa Fé are half froze for leather; and moccasins fetch two dollars, easy."

"Wagh! How's trade on Arkansa, and what's doin to the Fort?"

"Shians at Big Timber, and Bent's people trading smart. On North Fork, Jim Waters got a hundred pack right off, and Sioux making more."

"Whar's Bill Williams?"

"Gone under, they say: the Diggers took his hair."

"How's powder goin?"

"Two dollars a pint."

"Bacca?"

"A plew a plug."

"Got any about you?"

"Have *so*."

"Give us a chaw; and now let's camp."

Whilst unpacking their own animals, the two trappers could not refrain from glancing, every now and then, with no little astonishment, at the solitary stranger they had so unexpectedly encountered. If truth be told, his appearance not a little perplexed them. His hunting-frock of buckskin, shining with grease, and fringed pantaloons, over which the well-greased butcher-knife had evidently been often wiped after cutting his food, or butchering the carcass of deer and buffalo, were of genuine mountain make. His face, clean shaved, exhibited in its well-tanned and weather-beaten complexion, the effects of such natural cosmetics as sun and wind; and under the mountain hat of felt which covered his head, long uncut hair hung in Indian fashion on his shoulders. All this would have passed muster, had it not been for the most extraordinary equipment of a double-barrelled rifle; which, when it had attracted the eyes of the mountaineers, elicited no little astonishment, not to say derision. But, perhaps, nothing excited their admiration so much as the perfect docility of the stranger's animals; which, almost like dogs, obeyed his voice and call; and albeit that one, in a small sharp head and pointed ears, expanded nostrils, and eye twinkling and malicious, exhibited the personification of a "lurking devil," yet they could not but admire the perfect ease with which even this one, in common with the rest, permitted herself to be handled.

Dismounting, and unhitching from the horn of his saddle the coil of skin rope, one end of which was secured round the neck of the horse, he proceeded to unsaddle; and whilst so engaged, the three mules, two of which were [illegible]ed, one with the unbutchered carcass of a deer, the other with a pack of skins, &c., followed leisurely into the space chosen for the camp, and, cropping the grass at their ease, waited until a whistle called them to be unpacked.

The horse was a strong square-built bay; and, although the severities of a prolonged winter, with scanty pasture and long and trying travel, had robbed his bones of fat and flesh, tucked up his flank, and "ewed" his neck; still his clean and well-set legs, oblique shoulder, and withers fine as a deer's, in spite of his gaunt half-starved appearance, bore ample testimony as to what he *had* been; while his clear cheerful eye, and the hearty appetite with which he fell to work on the coarse grass of the bottom, proved that he had something in him still, and was game as ever. His tail, gnawed by the mules in days of strait, attracted the observant mountaineers.

"Hard doins when it come to that," remarked La Bonté.

Between the horse and two of the mules a mutual and great affection appeared to subsist, which was no more than natural, when their master observed to his companions that they had travelled together upwards of two thousand miles.

One of these mules was a short, thick-set, stumpy animal, with an enormous head surmounted by proportionable ears, and a pair of unusually large eyes, beaming the most perfect good temper and docility (most uncommon qualities in a mule.) Her neck was thick, and rendered more so in appearance by reason of her mane not being roached, (or, in English, hogged), which privilege she alone enjoyed of the trio; and her short, strong legs, ending in small, round, cat-like hoofs, were feathered with a profusion of dark brown hair.

As she stood stock-still, whilst the stranger removed the awkwardly packed deer from her back, she flapped her huge ears backward and forward, occasionally turning her head, and laying her cold nose against her master's cheek. When the pack was removed, he advanced to her head, and resting it on his shoulder, rubbed her broad and grizzled cheeks with both his hands for several minutes, the old mule laying her ears, like a rabbit, back upon her neck, and with half-closed eyes enjoyed mightily the manipulation. Then, giving her a smack upon the haunch, and a "hep-a" well known to the mule kind, the old favourite threw up her heels and cantered off to the horse, who was busily cropping the buffalo grass on the bluff above the stream.

Great was the contrast between the one just described and the next which came up to be divested of her pack. She, a tall beautifully shaped Mexican mule, of a light mouse colour, with a head like a deer's, and long springy legs, trotted up obedient to the call, but with ears bent back and curled up nose, and tail compressed between her legs. As her pack was being removed, she groaned and whined like a dog, as a thong or loosened strap touched her ticklish body, lifting her hind-quarters in a succession of jumps or preparatory kicks, and looking wicked as a panther. When nothing but the fore pack-saddle remained, she had worked herself into the last stage; and as the stranger cast loose the girth of buffalo hide, and was about to lift the saddle and draw the crupper from the tail, she drew her hind legs under her, more tightly compressed her tail, and almost shrieked with rage.

"Stand clear," he roared (knowing what was coming), and raised the saddle, when out went her hind legs, up went the pack into the air, and, with it dangling at her heels, away she tore, kicking the offending saddle as she ran. Her master, however, took this as matter of course, followed her and brought back the saddle, which he piled on the others to windward of the fire one of the trappers was kindling. Fire-making is a simple process with the mountaineers. Their bullet-pouches always contain a flint and steel, and sundry pieces of "punk"* or tinder; and pulling a handful of dry grass, which they screw into a nest, they place the lighted punk in this, and, closing the grass over it, wave it in the air, when it soon ignites, and readily kindles the dry sticks forming the foundation of the fire.

The tit-bits of the deer the stranger had brought in were soon roasting over the fire; whilst, as soon as the burning logs had deposited a sufficiency of ashes, a hole was raked in them, and the head of the deer, skin, hair, and all, placed in this primitive oven, and carefully covered with the hot ashes.

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* A pithy substance found in dead pine-trees.

A "heap" of "fat meat" in perspective, our mountaineers enjoyed their ante-prandial pipes, recounting the news of the respective regions whence they came; and so well did they like each other's company, so sweet was the "honey-dew" tobacco of which the strange hunter had good store, so plentiful the game about the creek, and so abundant the pasture for their winter-starved animals, that before the carcass of the "two-year" buck had been more than four-fifths consumed; and, although rib after rib had been picked and chucked over their shoulders to the wolves, and one fore leg and *the* "bit" of all, the head, were still cooked before them,—the three had come to the resolution to join company, and hunt in their present locality for a few days at least—the owner of the "two-shoot" gun volunteering to fill their horns with powder, and find tobacco for their pipes.

Here, on plenty of meat, of venison, bear, and antelope, they merrily luxuriated; returning after their daily hunts to the brightly burning camp-fire, where one always remained to guard the animals, and unloading their packs of meat, (all choicest portions), ate late into the night, and, smoking, wiled away the time in narrating scenes in their hard-spent lives, and fighting their battles o'er again.

The younger of the trappers, he who has figured under the name of La Bonté, had excited, by scraps and patches from his history, no little curiosity in the stranger's mind to learn the ups and downs of his career; and one night, when they assembled earlier than usual at the fire, he prevailed upon the modest trapper to "unpack" some passages in his wild adventurous life.

"Maybe," commenced the mountaineer, "you both remember when old Ashley went out with the biggest kind of band to trap the Columbia, and head-waters of Missoura and Yellow Stone. Well, that was the time this niggur first felt like taking to the mountains."

This brings us back to the year of our Lord 1825; and perhaps it will be as well, in order to render La Bonté's mountain language intelligible, to translate it at once into tolerable English, and to tell in the third person, but from his own lips, the scrapes which befell him in a sojourn of more than twenty years in the Far West, and the causes that impelled him to quit the comfort and civilisation of his home, to seek the perilous but engaging life of a trapper of the Rocky Mountains.

La Bonté was raised in the state of Mississippi, not far from Memphis, on the left bank of that huge and snag-filled river. His father was a Saint Louis Frenchman, his mother a native of Tennessee. When a boy, our trapper was "some," he said, with the rifle, and always had a hankering for the west; particularly when, on accompanying his father to Saint Louis every spring, he saw the different bands of traders and hunters start upon their annual expeditions to the mountains. Greatly did he envy the independent, *insouciant* trappers, as, in all the glory of beads and buckskin, they shouldered their rifles at Jake Hawkin's door (the rifle-maker of St Louis), and bade adieu to the cares and trammels of civilised life.

However, like a thoughtless beaver-kitten, he put his foot into a trap one fine day, set by Mary Brand, a neighbour's daughter, and esteemed "some punkins," or in other words toasted as the beauty of Memphis County, by the susceptible Mississippians. From that moment he was "gone beaver;" "he felt queer," he said, "all over, like a buffalo shot in the lights; he had no relish for mush and molasses; homminy and johnny cakes failed to excite his appetite. Deer and turkeys ran by him unscathed; he didn't know, he said, whether his rifle had hind-sights or not. He felt bad, that was a fact; but what ailed him he didn't know."

Mary Brand—Mary Brand—Mary Brand! the old Dutch clock ticked it. Mary Brand! his head throbbed it when he lay down to sleep. Mary Brand! his rifle-lock spoke it plainly when he cocked it, to raise a shaking sight at a deer. Mary Brand, Mary Brand! the whip-poor-will sung it, instead of her own well-known note; the bull-frogs croaked it in the swamp, and mosquitoes droned it in his ear as he tossed about his bed at night, wakeful, and striving to think what ailed him.

Who could that strapping young fellow, who passed the door just now, be going to see? Mary Brand: Mary Brand. And who can Big Pete Herring be dressing that silver fox-skin so carefully for? For whom but Mary Brand? And who is it that jokes, and laughs, and dances, with all the "boys" but him; and why?

Who but Mary Brand: and because the love-sick booby carefully avoids her.

"And Mary Brand herself—what is she like?"

"She's 'some' now; that *is* a fact, and the biggest kind of punkin at that," would have been the answer from any man, woman, or child in Memphis County, and truly spoken too; always understanding that the pumpkin is the fruit by which the *ne-plus-ultra* of female perfection is expressed amongst the figuratively-speaking westerns.

Being an American woman, of course she was tall, and straight and slim as a hickory sapling, well formed withal, with rounded bust, and neck white and slender as the swan's. Her features were small, but finely chiselled; and in this, it may be remarked, the lower orders of the American women differ from, and far surpass the same class in England, or elsewhere, where the features, although far prettier, are more vulgar and commonplace. Mary Brand had the bright blue eye, thin nose, and small but sweetly-formed mouth, the too fair complexion and dark brown hair, which characterise the beauty of the Anglo-American, the heavy masses (hardly curls), that fell over her face and neck, contrasting with their polished whiteness. Such was Mary Brand: and when to her good looks are added a sweet disposition, and all the best qualities of a thrifty housewife, it must be allowed that she fully justified the eulogiums of the good people of Memphis.

Well, to cut a love-story short, in doing which not a little moral courage is shown, young La Bonté fell desperately in love with the pretty Mary, and she with him; and small blame to her, for he was a proper lad of twenty—six feet in his moccasins—the best hunter and rifle-shot in the country, with many other advantages too numerous to mention. But when did the course, &c. e'er run smooth? When the affair had become a recognised "courting" (and Americans alone know the horrors of such prolonged purgatory), they became, to use La Bonté's words, "awful fond," and consequently about once a-week had their tiffs and makes-up.

However, on one occasion, at a "husking," and during one of these tiffs, Mary, every inch a woman, to gratify some indescribable feeling, brought to her aid jealousy—that old serpent who has caused such mischief in this world; and by a flirtation over the corn-cobs with Big Pete, La Bonté's former and only rival, struck so hard a blow at the latter's heart, that on the moment his brain caught fire, blood danced before his eyes, and he became like one possessed. Pete observed and enjoyed his struggling emotion—better for him had he minded his corn-shelling alone;—and the more to annoy his rival, paid the most sedulous attention to pretty Mary.

Young La Bonté stood it as long as human nature, at boiling heat, could endure; but when Pete, in the exultation of his apparent triumph, crowned his success by encircling the slender waist of the girl with his arm, and snatching a sudden kiss, he jumped upright from his seat, and seizing a small whisky-keg which stood in the centre of the corn-shellers, he hurled it at his rival, and crying to him, hoarse with passion, "to follow if he was a man," he left the house.

At that time, and even now, in the remoter states of the western country, rifles settled even the most trivial differences between the hot-blooded youths; and of such frequent occurrence and invariably bloody termination did these encounters become, that they scarcely produced sufficient excitement to draw together half-a-dozen spectators.

In the present case, however, so public was the quarrel, and so well known the parties concerned, that not only the people who had witnessed the affair, but all the neighbourhood, thronged to the scene of action, in a large field in front of the house, where the preliminaries of a duel between

Pete and La Bonté were being arranged by their respective friends.

Mary, when she discovered the mischief her thoughtlessness was likely to occasion, was almost beside herself with grief, but she knew how vain it would be to attempt to interfere. The poor girl, who was most ardently attached to La Bonté, was carried, swooning, into the house, where all the women congregated, and were locked in by old Brand, who, himself an old pioneer, thought but little of bloodshed, but refused to let the "women folk" witness the affray.

Preliminaries arranged, the combatants took up their respective positions at either end of a space marked for the purpose, at forty paces from each other. They were both armed with heavy rifles, and had the usual hunting-pouches, containing ammunition, hanging over the shoulder. Standing with the butts of their rifles on the ground, they confronted each other, and the crowd drawing away a few paces only on each side, left one man to give the word. This was the single word "fire;" and, after this signal was given, the combatants were at liberty to fire away until one or the other dropped.

At the word, both the men quickly raised their rifles to the shoulder, and, whilst the sharp cracks instantaneously rang, they were seen to flinch, as either felt the pinging sensation of a bullet entering his flesh. Regarding each other steadily for a few moments, the blood running down La Bonté's neck from a wound under the left jaw, whilst his opponent was seen to place his hand once to his right breast, as if to feel the position of his wound, they commenced reloading their rifles. But, as Pete was in the act of forcing down the ball with his long hickory wiping-stick, he suddenly dropped his right arm—the rifle slipped from his grasp—and, reeling for a moment like a drunken man—he fell dead to the ground.

Even here, however, there was law of some kind or another, and the consequences of the duel were, that the constables were soon on the trail of La Bonté to arrest him. He easily avoided them, and taking to the woods, lived for several days in as wild a state as the beasts he hunted and killed for his support.

Tired of this, he at last resolved to quit the country, and betake himself to the mountains, for which life he had ever felt an inclination.

When, therefore, he thought the officers of justice had grown slack in their search of him, and that the coast was comparatively clear, he determined to start on his distant expedition to the Far West.

Once more, before he carried his project into execution, he sought and obtained a last interview with Mary Brand.

"Mary," said he, "I'm about to break. They're hunting me like a fall buck, and I'm bound to quit.

Don't think any more about me, for I shall never come back."

Poor Mary burst into tears, and bent her head on the table near which she sat. When she again raised it, she saw La Bonté, his long rifle upon his shoulder, striding with rapid steps from the house. Year after year rolled on, and he did not return.

CHAPTER III.

A FEW days after his departure, La Bonté found himself at St Louis, the emporium of the fur trade, and the fast-rising metropolis of the precocious settlements of the west. Here, a prey to the agony of mind which jealousy, remorse, and blighted love mix into a very puchero of misery, he got into the company of certain "rowdies," a class that every western city particularly abounds in; and, anxious to drown his sorrows in any way, and quite unscrupulous as to the means, he plunged into all the vicious excitements of drinking, gambling, and fighting, which form the every-day amusements of the rising generation of St Louis.

Perhaps in no other part of the United States, where indeed humanity is frequently to be seen in many curious and unusual phases, is there a population so marked in its general character, and at the same time divided into such distinct classes, as in the above-named city. Dating, as it does, its foundation from yesterday—for what are thirty years in the growth of a metropolis?—its founders are now scarcely passed middle life, regarding with astonishment the growing works of their hands;

and whilst gazing upon its busy quays, piled with grain and other produce of the west, its fleets of huge steamboats lying tier upon tier alongside the wharves, its well-stored warehouses, and all the bustling concomitants of a great commercial depôt, they can scarcely realise the memory of a few short years, when on the same spot nothing was to be seen but the miserable hovels of a French village —the only sign of commerce being the unwieldy bateaux of the Indian traders, laden with peltries from the distant regions of the Platte and Upper Missouri. Where now intelligent and wealthy merchants walk erect, in conscious substantiality of purse and credit, and direct the commerce of a vast and well-peopled region, there stalked but the other day, in dress of buckskin, the Indian trader of the west; and all the evidences of life, mayhap, consisted of the eccentric vagaries of the different bands of trappers and hardy mountaineers, who accompanied, some for pleasure and some as escort, the periodically arriving bateaux, laden with the beaver skins and buffalo robes collected during the season at the different trading posts in the Far West.

These, nevertheless, were the men whose hardy enterprise opened to commerce and the plough the vast and fertile regions of the West. Rough and savage though they were, they were the true pioneers of that extraordinary tide of civilisation which has poured its resistless current through tracts large enough for kings to govern, over a country now teeming with cultivation, where, a few short years ago, countless herds of buffalo roamed unmolested, where the bear and deer abounded, and the savage Indian skulked through the woods and prairies, lord of the unappreciated soil that now yields its prolific treasures to the spade and plough of civilised man. To the wild and half-savage trapper, who may be said to exemplify the energy, enterprise, and hardihood characteristic of the American people, divested of all the false and vicious glare with which a high state of civilisation, too rapidly attained, has obscured their real and genuine character, in which the above traits are eminently prominent—to these men alone is due the empire of the West—destined in a few short years to become the most important of those confederate states composing the mighty union of North America.

Sprung, then, out of the wild and adventurous fur trade, St Louis, still the emporium of that species of commerce, preserves even now, in the character of its population, many of the marked peculiarities distinguishing its early founders, who were identified with the primitive Indian in hardihood and instinctive wisdom. Whilst the French portion of the population retain the thoughtless levity and frivolous disposition of their original source, the Americans of St Louis, who may lay claim to be native, as it were, are as strongly distinguished for determination and energy of character as they are for physical strength and animal courage; and are remarkable, at the same time, for a singular aptitude in carrying out commercial enterprises to successful terminations, apparently incompatible with the thirst of adventure and excitement which forms so prominent a feature in their character. In St Louis and with her merchants have originated many commercial enterprises of gigantic speculation, not confined to the immediate locality or to the distant Indian fur trade, but embracing all parts of the continent, and even a portion of the Old World. And here it must be remembered that St Louis is situated inland, at a distance of upwards of one thousand miles from the sea, and three thousand from the capital of the United States.

Besides her merchants and upper class, who form a little aristocracy even here, a large portion of her population, still connected with the Indian and fur trade, preserve all their original characteristics, unacted upon by the influence of advancing civilisation. There is, moreover, a large floating population of foreigners of all nations, who must possess no little amount of enterprise to be tempted to this spot, whence they spread over the remote western tracts, still infested by the savage; so that, if any of their blood is infused into the native population, the characteristic energy and enterprise is increased, and not tempered down by the foreign cross.

But perhaps the most singular of the casual population are the mountaineers, who, after several seasons spent in trapping, and with good store of dollars, arrive from the scene of their adventures, wild as savages, determined to enjoy themselves, for a time, in all the gaiety and dissipation of the western city. In one of the back streets of the town is a tavern well known as the "Rocky-Mountain House," and hither the trappers resort, drinking and fighting as long as their money lasts, which, as they are generous and lavish as Jack Tars, is for a few days only. Such scenes, both tragic and comic, as are enacted in the Rocky-Mountain House, are beyond the powers of pen to describe; and when a fandango is in progress, to which congregate the coquettish belles from "Vide Poche," as the French portion of the suburb is nicknamed,—the grotesque endeavours of the bear-like mountaineers to sport a figure on the light fantastic toe, and their insertions into the dance of the mystic jumps of Terpsichorean Indians when engaged in the "medicine" dances in honour of bear, of buffalo, or ravished scalp,—are such startling innovations on the choreographic art as would make the shade of Gallini quake and gibber in his pumps.

Passing the open doors and windows of the Mountain House, the stranger stops short as the sounds of violin and banjo twang upon his ears, accompanied by extraordinary noises—sounding unearthly to the greenhorn listener, but recognised by the initiated as an Indian song roared out of the stentorian lungs of a mountaineer, who patting his stomach with open hands, to improve the necessary shake, choruses the well-known Indian chant:—

Hi—Hi—Hi—Hi,
Hi-i—Hi-i—Hi-i—Hi-i
Hi-ya—hi-ya—hi-ya—hi-ya
Hi-ya—hi-ya—hi-ya—hi-ya
Hi-ya—hi-ya—hi—hi,
&c. &c. &c.

and polishes off the high notes with a whoop which makes the old wooden houses shake again, as it rattles and echoes down the street.

Here, over fiery "monaghahela," Jean Batiste, the sallow half-breed voyageur from the north—and who, deserting the service of the "North West" (the Hudson's Bay Company), has come down the Mississippi, from the "Falls," to try the sweets and liberty of "free" trapping—hobnobs with a stalwart leather-clad "boy," just returned from trapping on the waters of Grand River, on the western side the mountains, who interlards his mountain jargon with Spanish words picked up in Taos and California. In one corner a trapper, lean and gaunt from the starving regions of the Yellow Stone, has just recognised an old companyero, with whom he hunted years before in the perilous country of the Blackfeet.

"Why, John, old hos, how do you come on?"

"What! Meek, old 'coon! I thought you were under?"

One from Arkansa stalks into the centre of the room, with a pack of cards in his hand, and a handful of dollars in his hat. Squatting cross-legged on a buffalo robe, he smacks down the money, and cries out—"Ho, boys, hyar's a deck, and hyar's the beaver (rattling the coin), who dar set his hos? Wagh!"

Tough are the yarns of wondrous hunts and Indian perils, of hairbreadth 'scapes and curious "fixes." Transcendant are the qualities of sundry rifles, which call these hunters masters; "plum" is the "centre" each vaunted barrel shoots; sufficing for a hundred wigs is the "hair" each hunter has "lifted" from Indians' scalps; multitudinous the "coups" he has "struck." As they drink so do they brag, first of their guns, their horses, and their squaws, and lastly of themselves:—and when it comes to that, "ware steel."

La Bonté, on his arrival at St Louis, found himself one day in no less a place than this; and here he made acquaintance with an old trapper about to start for the mountains in a few days, to hunt on the head waters of Platte and Green River. With this man he resolved to start, and, having still some hundred dollars in cash, he immediately set about equipping himself for the expedition. To effect this, he first of all visited the gun-store of Hawken, whose rifles are renowned in the mountains, and exchanged his own piece, which was of very small bore, for a regular mountain rifle. This was of very heavy metal, carrying about thirty-two balls to the pound, stocked to the muzzle, and mounted with brass, its only ornament being a buffalo bull, looking exceedingly ferocious, which was not very artistically engraved upon the trap in the stock. Here, too, he laid in a few pounds of powder and lead, and all the necessaries for a long hunt.

His next visit was to a smith's store, which smith was black by trade and black by nature, for he was a nigger, and, moreover, celebrated as being the best maker of beaver-traps in St Louis, and of him he purchased six new traps, paying for the same twenty dollars—procuring, at the same time, an old trap-sack, made of stout buffalo skin, in which to carry them.

We next find La Bonté and his companion—one Luke, better known as Grey-Eye, one of his eyes having been "gouged" in a mountain fray—at Independence, a little town situated on the Missouri, several hundred miles above St Louis, and within a short distance of the Indian frontier.

Independence may be termed the "prairie port" of the western country. Here the caravans destined for Santa Fé, and the interior of Mexico, assemble to complete their necessary equipment Mules and oxen are purchased, teamsters hired, and all stores and outfit laid in here for the long journey over the wide expanse of prairie ocean. Here, too, the Indian traders and the Rocky-Mountain trappers rendezvous, collecting in sufficient force to ensure their safe passage through the

Indian country. At the seasons of departure and arrival of these bands, the little town presents a lively scene of bustle and confusion. The wild and dissipated mountaineers get rid of their last dollars in furious orgies, treating all comers to galore of drink, and pledging each other, in horns of potent whisky, to successful hunts and "heaps of beaver." When every cent has disappeared from their pouches, the free trapper often makes away with rifle, traps, and animals, to gratify his "dry" (for your mountaineer is never "thirsty"); and then, "hos and beaver" gone, is necessitated to hire himself to one of the leaders of big bands, and hypothecate his services for an equipment of traps and animals. Thus La Bonté picked up three excellent mules for a mere song, with their accompanying pack-saddles, *apishamores*,* and lariats, and the next day, with Luke, "put out" for Platte.

As they passed through the rendezvous, which was encamped on a little stream beyond the town, even our young Mississippian was struck with the novelty of the scene. Upwards of forty huge waggons, of Conostoga and Pittsburg build, and covered with snow-white tilts, were ranged in a semicircle, or rather a horse-shoe form, on the flat open prairie, their long "tongues" (poles) pointing outwards; with the necessary harness for four pairs of mules, or eight yoke of oxen, lying on the ground beside them, spread in ready order for "hitching up." Round the waggons groups of teamsters, tall stalwart young Missourians, were engaged in busy preparation for the start, greasing the wheels, fitting or repairing harness, smoothing ox-bows, or overhauling their own moderate kits or "possibles." They were all dressed in the same fashion: a pair of "homespun" pantaloons, tucked into thick boots reaching nearly to the knee, and confined round the waist by a broad leathern belt, which supported a strong butcher-knife in a sheath. A coarse checked shirt was their only other covering, with a fur cap on the head.

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* Saddle-blanket made of buffalo-calf skin.

Numerous camp-fires surrounded the waggons, and near them lounged wild-looking mountaineers, easily distinguished from the "greenhorn" teamsters by their dresses of buckskin, and their weather-beaten faces. Without an exception, these were under the influence of the rosy god; and one, who sat, the picture of misery, at a fire by himself—staring into the blaze with vacant countenance, his long matted hair hanging in unkempt masses over his face, begrimed with the dirt of a week, and pallid with the effects of ardent drink—was suffering from the usual consequences of having "kept it up" beyond the usual point, paying the penalty in a fit of "horrors"—as *delirium tremens* is most aptly termed by sailors and the unprofessional.

In another part, the merchants of the caravan and the Indian traders superintended the lading of the waggons, or mule packs. They were dressed in civilised attire, and some were even bedizened in St Louis or Eastern City dandyism, to the infinite disgust of the mountain men, who look upon a bourge-way (bourgeois) with most undisguised contempt, despising the very simplest forms of civilisation. The picturesque appearance of the encampment was not a little heightened by the addition of several Indians from the neighbouring Shawnee settlement, who, mounted on their small active horses, on which they reclined, rather than sat, in negligent attitudes, quietly looked on at the novel scene, indifferent to the "chaff" in which the thoughtless teamsters indulged at their expense. Numbers of mules and horses were picketed at hand, whilst a large herd of noble oxen were being driven towards the camp—the wo-ha of the teamsters sounding far and near, as they collected the scattered beasts in order to yoke up.

As most of the mountain men were utterly unable to move from camp, Luke and La Bonté, with three or four of the most sober, started in company, intending to wait on "Blue," a stream which runs into the Caw or Kanzas River, until the "balance" of the band came up. Mounting their mules, and leading the loose animals, they struck at once into the park-like prairie, and were speedily out of sight of civilisation.

It was the latter end of May, towards the close of the season of heavy rains, which in early spring render the climate of this country almost intolerable, at the same time that they fertilise and thaw the soil, so long bound up by the winter's frosts. The grass was every where luxuriantly green, and gaudy flowers dotted the surface of the prairie. This term, however, should hardly be applied to the beautiful undulating scenery of this park-like country. Unlike the flat monotony of the Grand Plains, here well wooded uplands, clothed with forest trees of every species, and picturesque dells, through which run clear bubbling streams belted with gay-blossomed shrubs, every where present themselves; whilst on the level meadow-land, topes of trees with spreading foliage afford a shelter to the game and cattle, and well-timbered knolls rise at intervals from the plain.

Many clear streams dashing over their pebbly beds intersect the country, from which, in the noonday's heat, the red-deer jump, shaking their wet sides, as the noise of approaching man disturbs them; and booming grouse rise from the tall luxuriant herbage at every step. Where the deep escarpments of the river banks exhibit the section of the earth, a rich alluvial soil of surpassing depth courts the cultivation of civilised man; and in every feature it is evident that here nature has worked with kindliest and most bountiful hand.

For hundreds of miles along the western or right bank of the Missouri does a country extend, with which, for fertility and natural resources, no part of Europe can stand comparison. Sufficiently large to contain an enormous population, it has, besides, every advantage of position, and all the natural capabilities which should make it the happy abode of civilised man. Through this unpeopled country the United States pours her greedy thousands, to seize upon the barren territories of her feeble neighbour.

Camping the first night on "Black Jack," our mountaineers here cut each man a spare hickory wiping-stick for his rifle; and La Bonté, who was the only greenhorn of the party, witnessed a savage ebullition of rage on the part of one of his companions, exhibiting the perfect unrestraint which these men impose upon their passions, and the barbarous anger which the slightest opposition to their will excites. One of the trappers, on arriving at the camping-place, dismounted from his horse, and, after divesting it of the saddle, endeavoured to lead his mule by the rope up to the spot where he wished to deposit his pack. Mule-like, however, the more he pulled the more stubbornly she remained in her tracks, planting her fore-legs firmly, and stretching out her neck with provoking obstinacy. Truth to tell, it does require the temper of a thousand Jobs to manage a mule; and in no case does the wilful mulishness of the animal stir up one's choler more than in the very trick this one played, and which is a daily occurrence. After tugging ineffectually for several minutes, winding the rope round his body, and throwing himself suddenly forward with all his strength, the trapper actually foamed with passion; and although he might have subdued the animal at once by fastening the rope with a half-hitch round its nose, this, with an obstinacy equal to that of the mule itself, he refused to attempt, preferring to vanquish her by main strength. Failing so to do, the mountaineer, with a volley of blasphemous imprecations, suddenly seized his rifle, and levelling it at the mule's head, shot her dead.

Passing the Wa-ka-rasha, a well-timbered stream, they met a band of Osages going "to buffalo." These Indians, in common with some tribes of the Pawnees, shave the head, with the exception of a ridge from the forehead to the centre of the scalp, which is "roached" or hogged like the mane of a mule, and stands erect, plastered with unguents, and ornamented with feathers of the hawk and turkey. The naked scalp is often painted in mosaic with black and red, the face with shining vermilion. This band were all naked to the breech-clout, the warmth of the sun having made them throw their dirty blankets from their shoulders. These Indians not unfrequently levy contributions on the strangers they accidentally meet; but they easily distinguish the determined mountaineer from the incautious greenhorn, and think it better to let the former alone.

Crossing Vermilion, the trappers arrived on the fifth day at "Blue," where they encamped in the broad timber belting the creek, and there awaited the arrival of the remainder of the party.

It was two days before they came up; but the following day they started for the mountains, fourteen in number, striking a trail which follows the "Big Blue" in its course through the prairies, which, as they advanced to the westward, gradually smoothed away into a vast unbroken expanse of rolling plain. Herds of antelope began to show themselves, and some of the hunters, leaving the trail, soon returned with plenty of their tender meat. The luxuriant but coarse grass they had hitherto seen now changed into the nutritious and curly buffalo grass, and their animals soon improved in appearance on the excellent pasture. In a few days, without any adventure, they struck the Platte River, its shallow waters (from which it derives its name) spreading over a wide and sandy bed, numerous sand bars obstructing the sluggish current, nowhere sufficiently deep to wet the forder's knee.

By this time, but few antelope having been seen, the party ran entirely out of meat; and, one whole day and part of another having passed without so much as a stray rabbit presenting itself, not a few objurgations on the buffalo grumbled from the lips of the hunters, who expected ere this to have reached the land of plenty. La Bonté killed a fine deer, however, in the river bottom, after they had encamped, not one particle of which remained after supper that night, but which hardly took the rough edge off their keen appetites. Although already in the buffalo range, no traces of these animals had yet been seen; and as the country afforded but little game, and the party did not care to halt and lose time in hunting for it, they moved along hungry and sulky, the theme of conversation being the well remembered merits of good buffalo meat,—of "fat fleece," "hump rib," and "tender loin;" of delicious "boudins," and marrow bones too good to think of. La Bonté had never seen the lordly animal, and consequently but half believed the accounts of the mountaineers, who described their countless bands as covering the prairie far as the eye could reach, and requiring days of travel to pass through; but the visions of such dainty and abundant feeding as they descanted on set his mouth watering, and danced before his eyes as he slept supperless, night after night, on the banks of the hungry Platte.

One morning he had packed his animals before the rest, and was riding a mile in advance of the party, when he saw on one side the trail, looming in the refracted glare which mirages the plains, three large dark objects without shape or form, which rose and fell in the exaggerated light like ships at sea. Doubting what it could be, he approached the strange objects; and as the refraction disappeared before him, the dark masses assumed a more distinct form, and clearly moved with life. A little nearer, and he made them out—they were buffalo. Thinking to distinguish himself, the greenhorn dismounted from his mule, and quickly hobbled her, throwing his lasso on the ground to trail behind when he wished to catch her. Then, rifle in hand, he approached the huge animals, and, being a good hunter, knew well to take advantage of the inequalities of the ground and face the wind; by which means he crawled at length to within forty yards of the buffalo, which quietly cropped the grass, unconscious of danger. Now, for the first time, he gazed upon the noble beast he had so often heard of, and longed to see. With coal-black beard sweeping the ground as he fed, an enormous bull was in advance of the others, his wild brilliant eyes peering from an immense mass of shaggy hair, which covered his neck and shoulder. From this point his skin was smooth as one's hand, a sleek and shining dun, and his ribs were well covered with shaking flesh. Whilst leisurely cropping the short curly grass he occasionally lifted his tail into the air, and stamped his foot as a fly or musquito annoyed him—flapping the intruder with his tail, or snatching at the itching part with his ponderous head.

When La Bonté had sufficiently admired the buffalo, he lifted his rifle, and, taking steady aim, and certain of his mark, pulled the trigger, expecting to see the huge beast fall over at the report. What was his surprise and consternation, however, to see the animal only flinch when the ball struck him, and then gallop off, followed by the others, apparently unhurt. As is generally the case with greenhorns, he had fired too high, ignorant that the only certain spot to strike a buffalo is but a few inches above the brisket, and that a higher shot is rarely fatal. When he rose from the ground, he saw all the party halting in full view of his discomfiture; and when he joined them, loud were the laughs, and deep the regrets of the hungry at his first attempt.

However, they now knew that they were in the country of meat; and a few miles farther, another band of stragglers presenting themselves, three of the hunters went in pursuit, La Bonté taking a mule to pack in the meat. He soon saw them crawling towards the band, and shortly two puffs of smoke, and the sharp cracks of their rifles, showed that they had got within shot; and when he rode up, two fine buffaloes were stretched upon the ground. Now, for the first time, he was initiated in the mysteries of "butchering." He watched the hunters as they turned the carcass on the belly, stretching out the legs to support it on each side. A transverse cut was then made at the nape of the neck, and, gathering the long hair of the boss in one hand, the skin was separated from the shoulder. It was then laid open from this point to the tail, along the spine, and then, freed from the sides and pulled down to the brisket, but still attached to it, was stretched upon the ground to receive the dissected portions. Then the shoulder was severed, the fleece removed from along the backbone, and the hump-ribs cut off with a tomahawk. All this was placed upon the skin; and after the "boudins" had been withdrawn from the stomach, and the tongue—a great dainty—taken from the head, the meat was packed upon the mule, and the whole party hurried to camp rejoicing.

There was merry-making in the camp that night, and the way they indulged their appetites—or, in their own language, "throw'd" the meat "cold"—would have made the heart of a dyspeptic leap for joy or burst with envy. Far into the "still watches of the tranquil night" the fat-clad "depouille" saw its fleshy mass grow small by degrees and beautifully less, before the trenchant blades of the hungry mountaineers; appetising yards of well-browned "boudin" slipped glibly down their throats; rib after rib of tender hump was picked and flung to the wolves; and when human nature, with helpless gratitude, and confident that nothing of superexcellent comestibility remained, was lazily wiping the greasy knife that had done such good service,—a skilful hunter was seen to chuckle to himself as he raked the deep ashes of the fire, and drew therefrom a pair of tongues so admirably baked, so soft, so sweet, and of such exquisite flavour, that a veil is considerately drawn over the effects their discussion produced in the mind of our greenhorn La Bonté, and the raptures they excited in the bosom of that, as yet, most ignorant mountaineer. Still, as he ate he wondered, and wondering admired, that nature, in giving him such profound gastronomic powers, and such transcendant capabilities of digestion, had yet bountifully provided an edible so peculiarly adapted to his ostrich-like appetite, that after consuming nearly his own weight in rich and fat buffalo meat, he felt as easy and as little incommoded as if he had lightly supped on strawberries and cream.

Sweet was the digestive pipe after such a feast; soft was the sleep and deep, which sealed the eyes of the contented trappers that night. It felt like the old thing, they said, to be once more amongst the "meat;" and, as they were drawing near the dangerous portion of the trail, they felt at home; although they now could never be confident, when they lay down at night upon their buffalo robes, of awaking again in this life, knowing, as they did, full well, that savage men lurked near, thirsting for their blood.

However, no enemies showed themselves as yet, and they proceeded quietly up the river, vast herds of buffaloes darkening the plains around them, affording them more than abundance of the choicest meat; but, to their credit be it spoken, no more was killed than was absolutely required,—unlike the cruel slaughter made by most of the white travellers across the plains, who wantonly destroy these noble animals, not even for the excitement of sport, but in cold-blooded and insane butchery. La Bonté had practice enough to perfect him in the art, and, before the buffalo range was passed, he was ranked as a first-rate hunter. One evening he had left the camp for meat, and was approaching a band of cows for that purpose, crawling towards them along the bed of a dry hollow in the prairie, when he observed them suddenly jump towards him, and immediately afterwards a score of mounted Indians appeared, whom, by their dress, he at once knew to be Pawnees and enemies. Thinking they might not discover him, he crouched down in the ravine; but a noise behind caused him to turn his head, and he saw some five or six advancing up the bed of the dry creek, whilst several more were riding on the bluffs. The cunning savages had cut off his retreat to his mule, which he saw in the possession of one of them. His presence of mind, however, did not desert him; and seeing at once that to remain where he was would be like being caught in a trap (as the Indians could advance to the edge of the bluff and shoot him from above), he made for the open prairie, determined at least to sell his scalp dearly, and make "a good fight." With a yell the Indians charged, but halted when they saw the sturdy trapper deliberately kneel, and, resting his rifle on the wiping-stick, take a steady aim as they advanced. Full well the Pawnees know, to their cost, that a

mountaineer seldom pulls his trigger without sending a bullet to the mark; and, certain that one at least must fall, they hesitated to make the onslaught. Steadily the white retreated with his face to the foe, bringing the rifle to his shoulder the instant that one advanced within shot, the Indians galloping round, firing the few guns they had amongst them at long distances, but without effect. One young "brave," more daring than the rest, rode out of the crowd, and dashed at the hunter, throwing himself, as he passed within a few yards, from the saddle, and hanging over the opposite side of his horse, thus presenting no other mark than his left foot. As he crossed La Bonté, he discharged his bow from under his horse's neck, and with such good aim, that the arrow, whizzing through the air, struck the stock of the hunter's rifle, which was at his shoulder, and, glancing off, pierced his arm, inflicting, luckily, but a slight wound. Again the Indian turned in his course, the others encouraging him with loud war-whoops, and, once more passing at still less distance, he drew his arrow to the head. This time, however, the eagle eye of the white detected the action, and suddenly rising from his knee as the Indian approached (hanging by his foot alone over the opposite side of the horse), he jumped towards the animal with outstretched arms and a loud yell, causing it to start suddenly, and swerve from its course. The Indian lost his foot-hold, and, after a fruitless struggle to regain his position, fell to the ground; but instantly rose upon his feet and gallantly confronted the mountaineer, striking his hand upon his brawny chest and shouting a loud whoop of defiance. In another instant the rifle of La Bonté had poured forth its contents; and the brave savage, springing into the air, fell dead to the ground, just as the other trappers, who had heard the firing, galloped up to the spot. At sight of them the Pawnees, with yells of disappointed vengeance, hastily retreated.

That night La Bonté first lifted hair!

A few days later the mountaineers reached the point where the Platte divides into two great forks: the northern one, stretching to the north-west, skirts the eastern base of the Black Hills, and sweeping round to the south rises in the vicinity of the mountain valley called the New Park, receiving the Laramie, Medicine Bow, and Sweet-Water creeks. The other, or "South Fork," strikes towards the mountains in a south-westerly direction, hugging the base of the main chain of the Rocky Mountains; and, fed by several small creeks, rises in the uplands of the Bayou Salade, near which is also the source of the Arkansa. To the forks of the Platte the valley of that river extends from three to five miles on each side, enclosed by steep sandy bluffs, from the summits of which the prairies stretch away in broad undulating expanse to the north and south. The "bottom," as it is termed, is but thinly covered with timber, the cotton-woods being scattered only here and there; but some of the islands in the broad bed of the stream are well wooded, leading to the inference that the trees on the banks have been felled by Indians who formerly frequented the neighbourhood of this river as a chosen hunting-ground. As, during the long winters, the pasture in the vicinity is scarce and withered, the Indians feed their horses on the bark of the sweet cotton-wood, upon which they subsist, and even fatten. Thus, wherever a village has encamped, the trunks of these trees strew the ground, their upper limbs and smaller branches peeled of their bark, and looking as white and smooth as if scraped with a knife.

On the forks, however, the timber is heavier and of greater variety, some of the creeks being well wooded with ash and cherry, which break the monotony of the everlasting cotton-wood.

Dense masses of buffalo still continued to darken the plains, and numerous bands of wolves hovered round the outskirts of the vast herds, singling out the sick and wounded animals, and preying upon such calves as the rifles and arrows of the hunters had bereaved of their mothers. The white wolf is the invariable attendant upon the buffalo; and when one of these persevering animals is seen, it is certain sign that buffalo are not far distant. Besides the buffalo wolf, there are four distinct varieties common to the plains, and all more or less attendant upon the buffalo. These are, the black, the gray, the brown, and last and least the *coyote*, or *cayeute* of the mountaineers, the "*wach-unka-mănet*," or "medicine wolf" of the Indians, who hold the latter animal in reverential awe. This little wolf, whose fur is of great thickness and beauty, is of diminutive size, but wonderfully sagacious, making up by cunning what it wants in physical strength. In bands of from three to thirty they not unfrequently station themselves along the "runs" of the deer and the antelope, extending their line for many miles—and the quarry being started, each wolf follows in pursuit until tired, when it relinquishes the chase to another relay, following slowly after until the animal is fairly run down, when all hurry to the spot and speedily consume the carcass. The cayeute, however, is often made a tool of by his larger brethren, unless, indeed, he acts from motives of spontaneous charity. When a hunter has slaughtered game, and is in the act of butchering it, these little wolves sit patiently at a short distance from the scene of operations, while at a more respectful one the larger wolves (the white or gray) lope hungrily around, licking their chops in hungry expectation. Not unfrequently the hunter throws a piece of meat towards the smaller one, who seizes it immediately, and runs off with the morsel in his mouth. Before he gets many yards with his prize, the large wolf pounces with a growl upon him, and the cayeute, dropping the meat, returns to his former position, and will continue his charitable act as long as the hunter pleases to supply him.

Wolves are so common on the plains and in the mountains, that the hunter never cares to throw away a charge of ammunition upon them, although the ravenous animals are a constant source of annoyance to him, creeping to the camp-fire at night, and gnawing his saddles and *apishamores*, eating the skin ropes which secure the horses and mules to their pickets, and even their very hobbles, and not unfrequently killing or entirely disabling the animals themselves.

Round the camp, during the night, the cayeute keeps unremitting watch, and the traveller not unfrequently starts from his bed with affright, as the mournful and unearthly chiding of the wolf breaks suddenly upon his ear: the long-drawn howl being taken up by others of the band, until it dies away in the distance, or some straggler passing within hearing answers to the note, and howls as he lopes away.

Our party crossed the south fork about ten miles from its juncture with the main stream, and then, passing the prairie, struck the north fork a day's travel from the other. At the mouth of an ash-timbered creek they came upon Indian "sign," and, as now they were in the vicinity of the treacherous Sioux, they moved along with additional caution, Frapp and Gonneville, two experienced mountaineers, always heading the advance.

About noon they had crossed over to the left bank of the fork, intending to camp on a large creek where some fresh beaver "sign" had attracted the attention of some of the trappers; and as, on further examination, it appeared that two or three lodges of that animal were not far distant, it was determined to remain here a day or two, and set their traps.

Gonneville, old Luke, and La Bonté, had started up the creek, and were carefully examining the banks for "sign," when the former, who was in front, suddenly paused, and looking intently up the stream, held up his hand to his companions to signal them to stop.

Luke and La Bonté both followed the direction of the trapper's intent and fixed gaze. The former uttered in a suppressed tone the expressive exclamation, Wagh!—the latter saw nothing but a wood-duck swimming swiftly down the stream, followed by her downy progeny.

Gonneville turned his head, and extending his arm twice with a forward motion up the creek, whispered—"Les sauvages."

"Injuns, sure, and Sioux at that," answered Luke.

Still La Bonté looked, but nothing met his view but the duck with her brood, now rapidly approaching; and as he gazed, the bird suddenly took wing, and, flapping on the water, flew a short distance down the stream and once more settled on it.

"Injuns?" he asked; "where are they?"

"Whar?" repeated old Luke, striking the flint of his rifle, and opening the pan to examine the priming. "What brings a duck a-streakin it down stream, if humans aint behint her? and who's thar in these diggins but Injuns, and the worst kind? and we'd better push to camp, I'm thinking, if we mean to save our hair."

"Sign" sufficient, indeed, it was to all the trappers, who, on being apprised of it, instantly drove in their animals, and picketed them; and hardly had they done so when a band of Indians made their appearance on the banks of the creek, from whence they galloped to the bluff which overlooked the camp at the distance of about six hundred yards; and crowning this, in number some forty or more, commenced brandishing their spears and guns, and whooping loud yells of defiance. The trappers had formed a little breast-work of their packs, forming a semicircle, the chord of which was made by the animals standing in a line, side by side, closely picketed and hobbled. Behind this defence stood the mountaineers, rifle in hand, and silent and determined. The Indians presently descended the bluff on foot, leaving their animals in charge of a few of the party, and, scattering, advanced under cover of the sage bushes which dotted the bottom, to about two hundred yards of the whites. Then a chief advanced before the rest, and made the sign for a talk with the Long-knives, which led to a consultation amongst the latter, as to the policy of acceding to it. They were in doubts as to the nation these Indians belonged to, some bands of the Sioux being friendly, and others bitterly hostile to the whites.

Gonneville, who spoke the Sioux language, and was well acquainted with the nation, affirmed they belonged to a band called the Yanka-taus, well known to be the most evil-disposed of that treacherous nation; another of the party maintained they were Brulés, and that the chief advancing towards them was the well-known Tah-sha-tunga or Bull Tail, a most friendly chief of that tribe. The majority, however, trusted to Gonneville, and he volunteered to go out to meet the Indian, and hear what he had to say. Divesting himself of all arms save his butcher-knife, he advanced towards the savage, who awaited his approach, enveloped in the folds of his blanket. At a glance he knew him to be a Yanka-tau, from the peculiar make of his moccasins, and the way in which his face was daubed with paint.

"Howgh!" exclaimed both as they met; and, after a silence of a few moments, the Indian spoke, asking—"Why the Long-knives hid behind their packs, when his band approached? Were they afraid, or were they preparing a dog-feast to entertain their friends? The whites were passing through his country, burning his wood, drinking his water, and killing his game; but he knew they had now come to pay for the mischief they had done, and that the mules and horses they had brought with them were intended as a present to their red friends.

"He was Mah-to-ga-shane," he said, "the Brave Bear: his tongue was short, but his arm long; and he loved rather to speak with his bow and his lance than with the weapon of a squaw. He had said it: the Long-knives had horses with them and mules; and these were for him, he knew, and for his 'braves.' Let the White-face go back to his people and return with the animals, or he, the 'Brave Bear,' would have to come and take them; and his young men would get mad and would feel blood in their eyes; and then he would have no power over them; and the whites would have to 'go under.'"

The trapper answered shortly:—"The Long-knives," he said, "had brought the horses for themselves—their hearts were big, but not towards the Yanka-taus: and if they had to give up their animals, it would be to *men* and not *squaws*. They were not 'wah-keitcha,'* (French engagés), but Long-knives; and, however short were the tongues of the Yanka-taus, theirs were still shorter, and their rifles longer. The Yanka-taus were dogs and squaws, and the Long-knives spat upon them."

Saying this, the trapper turned his back and rejoined his companions; whilst the Indian slowly proceeded to his people, who, on learning the contemptuous way in which their threats had been treated, testified their anger with loud yells; and, seeking whatever cover was afforded, commenced a scattering volley upon the camp of the mountaineers. The latter reserved their fire, treating with cool indifference the balls which began to rattle about them; but as the Indians, emboldened by this apparent inaction, rushed for a closer position, and exposed their bodies within a long range, half-a-dozen rifles rang from the assailed, and two Indians fell dead, one or two more being wounded. As yet, not one of the whites had been touched, but several of the animals had received wounds from the enemy's fire of balls and arrows. Indeed, the Indians remained at too great a distance to render the volleys from their crazy fusees any thing like effectual, and had to raise their pieces considerably to make their bullets reach as far as the camp. After three of their band had been killed outright, and many more wounded, their fire began to slacken, and they drew off to a greater distance, evidently resolved to beat a retreat. Retiring to the bluff, they discharged their pieces in a last volley, mounted their horses and galloped off, carrying their wounded with them. This last volley, however, although intended as a mere bravado, unfortunately proved fatal to one of the whites. Gonneville, at the moment, was standing on a pack, to get an un-

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* The French Canadians are called *wah-keitcha*—"bad medicine"—by the Indians, who account them treacherous and vindictive, and at the same time less daring than the American hunters.

interrupted sight for a last shot, when one of the random bullets struck him in the breast. La Bonté caught him in his arms as he was about to fall, and laying the wounded trapper gently on the ground, stripped him of his buckskin hunting-frock, to examine the wound. A glance was sufficient to convince his companions that the blow was mortal. The ball had passed through the lungs; and in a few moments the throat of the wounded man swelled and turned to a livid blue colour, as the choking blood ascended. Only a few drops of purple blood trickled from the wound,—a fatal sign,—and the eyes of the mountaineer were already glazing with death's icy touch. His hand still grasped the barrel of his rifle, which had done good service in the fray. Anon he essayed to speak, but, choked with blood, only a few inarticulate words reached the ears of his companions, as they bent over him.

"Rubbed—out—at—last," they heard him say, the words gurgling in his blood-filled throat; and opening his eyes once more, and turning them upwards for a last look at the bright sun, the trapper turned gently on his side and breathed his last sigh.

With no other tools than their scalp-knives, the hunters dug a grave on the banks of the creek; and whilst some were engaged in this work, others sought the bodies of the Indians they had slain in the attack, and presently returned with three reeking scalps, the trophies of the fight. The body of the mountaineer was wrapped in a buffalo robe, the scalps being placed on his breast, and the dead man was then laid in the shallow grave, and quickly covered—without a word of prayer, or sigh of grief; for, however much his companions may have felt, not a word escaped them. The bitten lip and frowning brow told of anger rather than of sorrow, as they vowed—what they thought would better please the spirit of the dead man than vain regrets—bloody and lasting revenge.

Trampling down the earth which filled the grave, they raised upon it a pile of heavy stones; and packing their mules once more, and taking a last look at their comrade's lonely resting-place, they turned their backs upon the stream, which has ever since been known as "Gonneville's Creek."

If the reader casts his eye over any of the recent maps of the western country, which detail the features of the regions embracing the Rocky Mountains, and the vast prairies at their bases, he will not fail to observe that many of the creeks or smaller streams which feed the larger rivers,—as the Missouri, Platte, and Arkansa,—are called by familiar proper names, both English and French. These are invariably christened after some unfortunate trapper, killed there in Indian fight; or treacherously slaughtered by the lurking savages, while engaged in trapping beaver on the stream. Thus alone is the memory of these hardy men perpetuated, at least of those whose fate is ascertained: for many, in every season, never return from their hunting expeditions, but meet a sudden death from Indians, or a more lingering fate from accident or disease in some lonely gorge of the mountains, where no footfall save their own, or the heavy tread of grizzly bear, disturbs the unbroken silence of the awful solitude. Then, as many winters pass without some old familiar faces making their appearance at the merry rendezvous, their long protracted absence may perhaps elicit a remark, as to where such and such a mountain worthy can have betaken himself, to which the casual rejoinder of "Gone under, maybe," too often gives a short but certain answer.

In all the philosophy of hardened hearts, our hunters turned from the spot where the unmourned trapper met his death. La Bonté, however, not yet entirely steeled by mountain life to a perfect indifference to human feeling, drew his hard hand across his eye, as the unbidden tear rose from his rough but kindly heart. He could not forget so soon the comrade he had lost, the companion in the hunt or over the cheerful camp-fire, the narrator of many a tale of dangers past, of sufferings from hunger, cold, thirst, and untended wounds, of Indian perils, and other vicissitudes. One tear dropped from the young hunter's eye, and rolled down his cheek—the last for many a long year.

In the forks of the northern branch of the Platte, formed by the junction of the Laramie, they found a big village of the Sioux encamped near the station of one of the fur companies. Here the party broke up; many, finding the alcohol of the traders an impediment to their further progress, remained some time in the vicinity, while La Bonté, Luke, and a trapper named Marcelline, started in a few days to the mountains, to trap on Sweet Water and Medicine Bow. They had leisure, however, to observe all the rascalities connected with the Indian trade, although at this season (August) hardly commenced. However, a band of Indians having come in with several packs of last year's robes, and being anxious to start speedily on their return, a trader from one of the forts had erected his lodge in the village.

Here he set to work immediately, to induce the Indians to trade. First, a chief appoints three "soldiers" to guard the trader's lodge from intrusion; and these sentries amongst the thieving fraternity can be invariably trusted. Then the Indians are invited to have a drink—a taste of the fire-water being given to all to incite them to trade. As the crowd presses upon the entrance to the lodge, and those in rear become impatient, some large-mouthed savage who has received a portion of the spirit, makes his way, with his mouth full of the liquor and cheeks distended, through the throng, and is instantly surrounded by his particular friends. Drawing the face of each, by turns, near his own, he squirts a small quantity into his open mouth, until the supply is exhausted, when he returns for more, and repeats the generous distribution.

When paying for the robes, the traders, in measuring out the liquor in a tin half-pint cup, thrust their thumbs or the four fingers of the hand into the measure, in order that it may contain the less, or not unfrequently fill the bottom with melted buffalo fat, with the same object. So greedy are the Indians, that they never discover the cheat, and, once under the influence of the liquor, cannot distinguish between the first cup of comparatively strong spirit, and the following ones diluted five hundred per cent, and poisonously drugged to boot.

Scenes of drunkenness, riot, and bloodshed last until the trade is over. In the winter it occupies several weeks, during which period the Indians present the appearance, under the demoralising influence of the liquor, of demons rather than of men.

CHAPTER IV.

La Bonté and his companions proceeded up the river, the Black Hills on their left hand, from which several small creeks or feeders swell the waters of the North Fork. Along these they hunted unsuccessfully for beaver "sign," and it was evident the spring hunt had almost exterminated the animal in this vicinity. Following Deer Creek to the ridge of the Black Hills, they crossed the mountain on to the waters of the Medicine Bow, and here they discovered a few lodges, and La Bonté set his first trap. He and old Luke finding "cuttings" near the camp, followed the "sign" along the bank until the practised eye of the latter discovered a "slide," where the beaver had ascended the bank to chop the trunk of a cotton wood, and convey the bark to its lodge. Taking a trap from "sack," the old hunter, after setting the trigger, placed it carefully under the water, where the "slide" entered the stream, securing the chain to the stem of a sappling on the bank; while a stick, also attached to the trap by a thong, floated down the stream, to mark the position of the trap, should the animal carry it away.

A little farther on, and near another "run," three traps were set; and over these Luke placed a little stick, which he first dipped into a mysterious-looking phial containing his "medicine." *

The next morning they visited the traps, and had the satisfaction of finding three fine beaver secured in the first three they visited, and the fourth, which had been carried away, they discovered by the float-stick, a little distance down the stream, with a large drowned beaver between its teeth.

The animals being carefully skinned, they returned to camp with the choicest portions of the meat, and the tails, on which they most luxuriously supped; and La Bonté was fain to confess that all his ideas of the superexcellence of buffalo were thrown in the shade by the delicious beaver tail, the rich meat of which he was compelled to allow was "great eating," unsurpassed by "tender loin" or "boudin," or other meat of whatever kind he had eaten of before.

The country where La Bonté and his companions were trapping, is very curiously situated in the extensive bend of the Platte which encloses the Black Hill range on the north, and which bounds the large expanse of broken tract known as the Laramie Plains, their southern limit being the base of the Medicine Bow Mountains. From the north-western corner of the bend, an inconsiderable range

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* A substance obtained from a gland in the scrotum of the beaver, and used to attract that animal to the trap.

extends to the westward, gradually decreasing in height until it reaches an elevated plain, which forms a break in the stupendous chain of the Rocky Mountains, and affords the easy passage now known as the Great, or South Pass. So gradual is the ascent of this portion of the mountain, that the traveller can scarcely believe he is crossing the dividing ridge between the waters which flow into the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and that in a few minutes he can fling two sticks into two neighbouring streams, one to be carried thousands of miles, traversed by the eastern waters in their course to the Gulf of Mexico, the other to be borne a lesser distance to the Gulf of California.

The country is frequented by the Crows and Snakes, who are at perpetual war with the Shians and Sioux, following them often far down the Platte, where many bloody battles have taken place. The Crows are esteemed friendly to the whites; but when on war expeditions, and "hair" their object, it is always dangerous to fall in with Indian war-parties, and particularly in the remote regions of the mountains, where they do not anticipate retaliation.

Trapping with tolerable success in this vicinity, the hunters crossed over, as soon as the premonitory storms of approaching winter warned them to leave the mountains, to the waters of Green River, one of the affluents of the Colorado, intending to winter at a rendezvous to be held in "Brown's

Hole"—an enclosed valley so called—which, abounding in game, and sheltered on every side by lofty mountains, is a favourite wintering-ground of the mountaineers. Here they found several trapping bands already arrived; and a trader from the Uintah country, with store of powder, lead, and tobacco, prepared to ease them of their hardly-earned peltries.

Singly, and in bands numbering from two to ten, the trappers dropped into the rendezvous; some with many pack-loads of beaver, others with greater or less quantity, and more than one on foot, having lost his animals and peltry by Indian thieving. Here were soon congregated many mountaineers, whose names are famous in the history of the Far West. Fitzpatrick and Hatcher, and old Bill Williams, well known leaders of trapping parties, soon arrived with their bands. Sublette came in with his men from Yellow Stone, and many of Wyeth's New Englanders were there. Chabonard with his half-breeds, Wah-keitchas all, brought his peltries from the lower country; and half-a-dozen Shawanee and Delaware Indians, with a Mexican from Taos, one Marcelline, a fine strapping fellow, the best trapper and hunter in the mountains, and ever first in the fight. Here, too, arrived the "Bourgeois" traders of the "North West"* Company, with their superior equipments, ready to meet their trappers, and purchase the beaver at an equitable value; and soon the trade opened, and the encampment assumed a busy appearance.

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* The Hudson's Bay Company is so called by the American trappers.

A curious assemblage did the rendezvous present, and representatives of many a land met there. A son of *La belle France* here lit his pipe from one proffered by a native of New Mexico. An Englishman and a Sandwich Islander cut a quid from the same plug of tobacco. A Swede and an "old Virginian" puffed together. A Shawanee blew a peaceful cloud with a scion of the "Six Nations." One from the Land of Cakes—a canny chiel—sought to "get round" (in trade) a right "smart" Yankee, but couldn't "shine."

The beaver went briskly, six dollars being the price paid per lb. in goods—for money is seldom given in the mountain market, where "beaver" is cash, for which the articles supplied by the traders are bartered. In a very short time peltries of every description had changed hands, either by trade, or by gambling with cards and betting. With the mountain men bets decide every question that is raised, even the most trivial; and if the Editor of *Bell's Life* were to pay one of these rendezvous a winter visit, he would find the broad sheet of his paper hardly capacious enough to answer all the questions which would be referred to his decision.

Before the winter was over, La Bonté had lost all traces of civilised humanity, and might justly claim to be considered as "hard a case" as any of the mountaineers then present. Long before the spring opened, he had lost all the produce of his hunt and both his animals, which, however, by a stroke of luck, he recovered, and wisely "held on to" for the future. Right glad when spring appeared, he started from Brown's Hole, with four companions, to hunt the Uintah or Snake country, and the affluents of the larger streams which rise in that region and fall into the Gulf of California.

In the valley of the Bear River they found beaver abundant, and trapped their way westward until they came upon the famed locality of the Beer and Soda Springs—natural fountains of mineral water, renowned amongst the trappers as being "medicine" of the first order.

Arriving one evening, about sun-down, at the Bear Spring, they found a solitary trapper sitting over the rocky basin, intently regarding, with no little awe, the curious phenomenon of the bubbling gas. Behind him were piled his saddles and a pack of skins, and at a little distance a hobbled Indian pony fed amongst the cedars which formed a grove round the spring. As the three hunters dismounted from their animals, the lone trapper scarcely noticed their arrival, his eyes being still intently fixed upon the water. Looking round at last, he was instantly recognised by one of La Bonté's companions, and saluted as "Old Rube." Dressed from head to foot in buckskin, his face, neck, and hands appeared to be of the same leathery texture, so nearly did they assimilate in colour to the materials of his dress. He was at least six feet two or three in his moccasins, straight-limbed and wiry, with long arms ending in hands of tremendous grasp, and a quantity of straight black hair hanging on his shoulders. His features, which were undeniably good, wore an expression of comical gravity, never relaxing into a smile, which a broad good-humoured mouth could have grinned from ear to ear.

"What, boys," he said, "will you be simple enough to camp here, alongside these springs? Nothing good ever came of sleeping here, I tell you, and the worst kind of devils are in those dancing waters."

"Why, old hos," cried La Bonté, "what brings you hyar then, and camp at that?"

"This niggur," answered Rube solemnly, "has been down'd upon a sight too often to be skeared by what can come out from them waters; and thar arn't a devil as hisses thar, as can 'shine' with this child, I tell you. I've tried him onest, an' fout him to clawin' away to Eustis,* and if I draws my knife again on such varmint, I'll raise his hair, as sure as shootin.'"

Spite of the reputed dangers of the locality, the trappers camped on the spot, and many a draught of the delicious sparkling water they quaffed in honour of the "medicine" of the fount. Rube, however, sat sulky and silent, his huge form bending over his legs, which were crossed, Indian fashion, under him, and his long bony fingers spread over the fire, which had been made handy to the spring. At last they elicited from him that he had sought this spot for the purpose of "*making medicine*," having been persecuted by extraordinary ill luck, even at this early period of his hunt—the Indians having stolen two out of his three animals, and three of his half-dozen traps. He had, therefore, sought the springs for the purpose of invoking the fountain spirits, which, a perfect Indian in his simple heart, he implicitly believed to inhabit their mysterious waters. When the others had, as he thought, fallen asleep, La Bonté observed the ill-starred trapper take from his pouch a curiously carved red stone pipe, which he carefully charged with tobacco and kinnik-kinnik. Then approaching the spring, he walked three times round it, and gravely sat himself down. Striking fire with his flint and steel, he lit his pipe, and, bending the stem three several times towards the water, he inhaled a vast quantity of smoke, and bending back his neck and looking upwards, puffed it into the air. He then blew another puff towards the four points of the compass, and emptying the pipe into his hand, cast the consecrated contents into the spring, saying a few Indian "medicine" words of cabalistic import. Having performed the ceremony to his satisfaction, he returned to the fire, smoked a pipe on his own hook, and turned into his buffalo robe, conscious of having done a most important duty.

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* A small lake near the head waters of the Yellow Stone, near which are some curious thermal springs of ink-black water.

In the course of their trapping expedition, and accompanied by Rube, who knew the country well, they passed near the Great Salt Lake, a vast inland sea, whose salitrose waters cover an extent of upwards of one hundred and forty miles in length, by eighty in breadth. Fed by several streams, of which the Big Bear River is the most considerable, this lake presents the curious phenomenon of a vast body of water without any known outlet. According to the trappers, an island, from which rises a chain of lofty mountains, nearly divides the north-western portion of the lake, whilst a smaller one, within twelve miles of the northern shore, rises six hundred feet from the level of the water. Rube declared to his companions that the larger island was known by the Indians to be inhabited by a race of giants, with whom no communication had ever been held by mortal man; and but for the casual wafting to the shores of the lake of logs of gigantic trees, cut by axes of extraordinary size, the world would never have known that such a people existed. They were, moreover, white as themselves, and lived upon corn and fruits, and rode on elephants, &c.

Whilst following a small creek at the south-west extremity of the lake, they came upon a band of miserable Indians, who, from the fact of their subsisting chiefly on roots, are called the Diggers. At first sight of the whites they immediately fled from their wretched huts, and made towards the mountain; but one of the trappers, galloping up on his horse, cut off their retreat, and drove them like sheep before him back to their village. A few of these wretched creatures came into camp at sundown, and were regaled with such meat as the larder afforded. They appeared to have no other food in their village but bags of dried ants and their larvæ, and a few roots of the yampah. Their huts were constructed of a few bushes of greasewood, piled up as a sort of breakwind, in which they huddled in their filthy skins. During the night, they crawled up to the camp and stole two of the horses, and the next morning not a sign of them was visible. Now La Bonté witnessed a case of mountain law, and the practical effects of the "lex talionis" of the Far West.

The trail of the runaway Diggers bore to the north-west, or along the skirt of a barren waterless desert, which stretches far away from the southern shores of the Salt Lake to the borders of Upper California. La Bonté, with three others, determined to follow the thieves, recover their animals, and then rejoin the other two (Luke and Rube) on a creek two days' journey from their present camp. Starting at sunrise, they rode on at a rapid pace all day, closely following the trail, which led directly to the north-west, through a wretched sandy country, without game or water. From the appearance of the track, the Indians must still have been several hours ahead of them, when the fatigue of their horses, suffering from want of grass and water, compelled them to camp near the head of a small water-course, where they luckily found a hole containing a little water, and whence a broad Indian trail passed, apparently frequently used. Long before daylight they were again in the saddle, and, after proceeding a few miles, saw the lights of several fires a short distance ahead of them. Halting here, one of the party advanced on foot to reconnoitre, and presently returned with the intelligence that the party they were in pursuit of had joined a village numbering thirty or forty huts.

Loosening their girths, they permitted their tired animals to feed on the scanty herbage which presented itself, whilst they refreshed themselves with a pipe of tobacco—for they had no meat of any description with them, and the country afforded no game. As the first streak of dawn appeared in the east, they mounted their horses, after first examining their rifles, and moved cautiously towards the Indian village. As it was scarcely light enough for their operations, they waited behind a sandhill in the vicinity, until objects became more distinct, and then, emerging from their cover with loud war-whoops, they charged abreast into the midst of the village.

As the frightened Indians were scarcely risen from their beds, no opposition was given to the daring mountaineers, who, rushing upon the flying crowd, discharged their rifles at close quarters, and then, springing from their horses, attacked them knife in hand, and only ceased the work of butchery when nine Indians lay dead upon the ground. All this time the women, half dead with fright, were huddled together on the ground, howling piteously; and the mountaineers advancing to them, whirled their lassos round their heads, and throwing the open nooses into the midst, hauled out three of them, and securing their arms in the rope, bound them to a tree, and then proceeded to scalp the dead bodies. Whilst they were engaged in this work, an old Indian, withered and grisly, and hardly bigger than an ape, suddenly emerged from a rock, holding in his left hand a bow and a handful of arrows, whilst one was already drawn to the head. Running towards them, and almost before the hunters were aware of his presence, he discharged an arrow at a few yards' distance, which buried itself in the ground not a foot from La Bonté's head as he bent over the body of the Indian he was scalping; and hardly had the whiz ceased, when whirr flew another, striking him in his right shoulder. Before the Indian could fit a third arrow to his bow, La Bonté sprang upon him, seized him by the middle, and spinning his pigmy form round his head, as easily as he would have twirled a tomahawk, he threw him with tremendous force on the ground at the feet of one of his companions, who, stooping down, coolly thrust his knife into the Indian's breast, and quickly tore off his scalp.

The slaughter over, without casting an eye to the captive squaws, the trappers proceeded to search the village for food, of which they stood much in need. Nothing, however, was found but a few bags of dried ants, which, after eating voraciously of, but with wry mouths, they threw aside, saying the food was worse than "poor bull." They found, however, the animals they had been robbed of, and two more besides,—wretched half-starved creatures; and on these mounting their captives, they hurried away on their journey back to their companions, the distance being computed at three days' travel from their present position. However, they thought, by taking a more direct course, they might find better pasture for their animals, and water, besides saving at least half a day by the short cut. To their cost, they proved the old saying, that "a short cut is always a long road," as will be presently shown.

It has been said that from the south-western extremity of the Great Salt Lake a vast desert extends for hundreds of miles, unbroken by the slightest vegetation, destitute of game and water, and presenting a cheerless expanse of sandy plain, or rugged mountain, thinly covered with dwarf pine or cedar, the only evidence of vegetable life. Into this desert, ignorant of the country, the trappers struck, intending to make their short cut; and, travelling on all day, were compelled to camp at night, without water or pasture for their exhausted animals, and themselves ravenous with hunger and parched with thirst. The next day three of their animals "gave out," and they were fain to leave them behind; but imagining that they must soon strike a creek, they pushed on until noon, but still no water presented itself, nor a sign of game of any description. The animals were nearly exhausted, and a horse which could scarcely keep up with the slow pace of the others was killed, and its blood greedily drunk; a portion of the flesh being eaten raw, and a supply carried with them for future emergencies.

The next morning two of the horses lay dead at their pickets, and one only remained, and this in such a miserable state that it could not possibly have travelled six miles further. It was, therefore, killed, and its blood drunk, of which, however, the captive squaws refused to partake. The men began to feel the effects of their consuming thirst, which the hot horse's blood only served to increase; their lips became parched and swollen, their eyes bloodshot, and a giddy sickness seized them at intervals. About mid-day they came in sight of a mountain on their right hand, which appeared to be more thickly clothed with vegetation; and arguing from this that water would be found there, they left their course and made towards it, although some eight or ten miles distant. On arriving at the base, the most minute search failed to discover the slightest traces of water, and the vegetation merely consisted of dwarf piñon and cedar. With their sufferings increased by the exertions they had used in reaching the mountain, they once more sought the trail, but every step told on their exhausted frames. The sun was very powerful, the sand over which they floundered was deep and heavy, and, to complete their sufferings a high wind blew it in their faces, filling their mouths and noses with its searching particles.

Still they struggled onwards manfully, and not a murmur was heard until their hunger had entered the *second stage* upon the road to starvation. They had now been three days without food or water; under which privation nature can hardly sustain herself for a much longer period. On the fourth morning, the men looked wolfish; their captives following behind in sullen and perfect indifference, occasionally stooping down to catch a beetle if one presented itself, and greedily devouring it. A man named Forey, a Canadian half-breed, was the first to complain. "If this lasted another sundown," he said, "some of them would 'be rubbed out;' that meat had to be 'raised' anyhow; and for his part, he knew where to look for a feed, if no game was seen before they put out of camp on the morrow; and meat was meat, anyhow they fixed it."

No answer was made to this, though his companions well understood him: their natures as yet revolted against the last expedient. As for the three squaws, all of them young girls, they followed behind their captors without a word of complaint, and with the stoical indifference to pain and suffering, which alike characterises the haughty Delaware of the north and the miserable stunted Digger of the deserts of the Far West. On the morning of the fifth day, the party were seated round a small fire of piñon, hardly able to rise and commence their journey, the squaws squatting over another at a little distance, when Forey commenced again to suggest that, if nothing offered, they must either take the alternative of starving to death, for they could not hope to last another day, or have recourse to the revolting extremity of sacrificing one of the party to save the lives of all. To this, however, there was a murmur of dissent, and it was finally resolved that all should sally out and hunt; for a deer-track had been discovered near the camp, which, although it was not a fresh one, proved that there must be game in the vicinity. Weak and exhausted as they were, they took their rifles and started for the neighbouring uplands, each taking a different direction.

It was nearly sunset when La Bonté returned to the camp, where he already espied one of his companions engaged in cooking something over the fire. Hurrying to the spot, overjoyed with the anticipations of a feast, he observed that the squaws were gone; but, at the same time, thought it was not improbable they had escaped during their absence. Approaching the fire, he observed Forey broiling some meat on the embers, whilst at a little distance lay what he fancied was the carcass of a deer.

"Hurrah, boy!" he exclaimed, as he drew near the fire. "You've 'made' a 'raise,' I see."

"*Well*, I have," rejoined the other, turning his meat with the point of his butcher knife. "There's the meat, hos—help yourself."

La Bonté drew the knife from his scabbard, and approached the spot his companion was pointing to; but what was his horror to see the yet quivering body of one of the Indian squaws, with a large portion of the flesh butchered from it, part of which Forey was already greedily devouring. The knife dropped from his hand, and his heart rose to his throat.

The next day he and his companion struck the creek where Rube and the other trapper had agreed to await them, and found them in camp with plenty of meat, and about to start again on their hunt, having given up the others for lost. From the day they parted, nothing was ever heard of La Bonté's other two companions, who doubtless fell a prey to utter exhaustion, and were unable to return to the camp. And thus ended the Digger expedition.

It may appear almost incredible that men having civilised blood in their veins could perpetrate such wanton and cold-blooded acts of aggression on the wretched Indians, as that detailed above; but it is fact that the mountaineers never lose an opportunity of slaughtering these miserable Diggers, and attacking their villages, often for the purpose of capturing women, whom they carry off, and not unfrequently sell to other tribes, or to each other. In these attacks neither sex nor age is spared; and your mountaineer has as little compunction in taking the life of an Indian woman, as he would have in sending his rifle-ball through the brain of a Crow or Blackfoot warrior.

La Bonté now found himself without animals, and fairly "afoot;" consequently nothing remained for him but to seek some of the trapping bands, and hire himself for the hunt. Luckily for him, he soon fell in with Roubideau, on his way to Uintah, and was supplied by him with a couple of animals; and thus equipped, he started again with a large band of trappers, who were going to hunt on the waters of Grand River and the Gila. Here they fell in with another nation of Indians, from which branch out the innumerable tribes inhabiting Northern Mexico and part of California. They were in general friendly, but lost no opportunity of stealing horses or any articles left lying about the camp. On one occasion, the trappers being camped on a northern affluent of the Gila, a volley of arrows was discharged amongst them, severely wounding one or two of the party, as they sat round the camp fires. The attack, however, was not renewed, and the next day the camp was moved further down the stream, where beaver was tolerably abundant. Before sundown a number of Indians made their appearance, and making signs of peace, were admitted into the camp.

The trappers were all sitting at their suppers over the fires, the Indians looking gravely on, when it was remarked that now would be a good opportunity to retaliate upon them for the trouble their incessant attacks had entailed upon the camp. The suggestion was highly approved of, and instantly acted upon. Springing to their feet, the trappers seized their rifles, and commenced the slaughter. The Indians, panic-struck, fled without resistance, and numbers fell before the death-dealing rifles of the mountaineers. A chief, who had been sitting on a rock near the fire where the leader of the trappers sat, had been singled out by the latter as the first mark for his rifle.

Placing the muzzle to his heart, he pulled the trigger, but the Indian, with extraordinary tenacity of life, rose and grappled with his assailant. The white was a tall powerful man, but, notwithstanding the deadly wound the Indian had received, he had his equal in strength to contend against. The naked form of the Indian twisted and writhed in his grasp, as he sought to avoid the trapper's uplifted knife. Many of the latter's companions advanced to administer the *coup-de grâce* to the savage, but the trapper cried to them to keep off:

"If he couldn't whip the Injun," he said, "he'd go under."

At length he succeeded in throwing him, and, plunging his knife no less than seven times into his body, he tore off his scalp, and went in pursuit of the flying savages. In the course of an hour or two, all the party returned, and sitting by the fires, resumed their suppers, which had been interrupted in the manner just described. Walker, the captain of the band, sat down by the fire where he had been engaged in the struggle with the Indian chief, whose body was lying within a few paces of it. He was in the act of fighting the battle over again to one of his companions, and was saying that the Indian had as much life in him as a buffalo bull, when, to the horror of all present, the savage, who had received wounds sufficient for twenty deaths, suddenly rose to a sitting posture, the fire shedding a glowing light upon the horrid spectacle. The face was a mass of clotted blood, which flowed from the lacerated scalp, whilst gouts of blood streamed from eight gaping wounds in the naked breast.

Slowly this frightful figure rose to a sitting posture, and, bending slowly forward to the fire, the mouth was seen to open wide, and a hollow gurgling—owg-h-h—broke from it.

"H—!" exclaimed the trapper—and jumping up, he placed a pistol to the ghastly head, the eyes of which sternly fixed themselves on his, and pulling the trigger, blew the poor wretch's skull to atoms.

The Gila passes through a barren, sandy country, with but little game, and sparsely inhabited by several different tribes of the great nation of the Apache. Unlike the rivers of this western region, this stream is, in most parts of its course, particularly towards its upper waters, entirely bare of timber, and the bottom, through which it runs, affords but little of the coarsest grass. Whilst on this stream, the trapping party lost several animals for want of pasture, and many more from the predatory attacks of the cunning Indians. These losses, however, they invariably made good whenever they encountered a native village—taking care, moreover, to repay themselves with interest whenever occasion offered.

Notwithstanding the sterile nature of the country, the trappers, during their passage up the Gila, saw with astonishment that the arid and barren valley had once been peopled by a race of men far superior to the present nomade tribes who roam over it. With no little awe they gazed upon the ruined walls of large cities, and the remains of houses, with their ponderous beams and joists, still testifying to the skill and industry with which they were constructed: huge ditches and irrigating canals, now filled with rank vegetation, furrowed the plains in the vicinity, marking the spot where once green waving maize and smiling gardens covered what now is a bare and sandy desert. Pieces of broken pottery, of domestic utensils, stained with bright colours, every where strewed the ground; and spear and arrow-heads of stone, and quaintly carved idols, and women's ornaments of agate and obsidian, were picked up often by the wondering trappers, examined with child-like curiosity, and thrown carelessly aside.*

A Taos Indian, who was amongst the band, was evidently impressed with a melancholy awe, as he regarded these ancient monuments of his fallen people. At midnight he rose from his blanket and left the camp, which was in the vicinity of the ruined city, stealthily picking his way through the line of slumbering forms which lay around; and the watchful sentinel observed him approach the ruins with a slow and reverential gait. Entering the mouldering walls, he gazed silently around, where in ages past his ancestors trod proudly, a civilised race, the tradition of which, well known to his people, served but to make their present degraded position more galling and apparent. Cowering under the shadow of a crumbling wall, the Indian drew his blanket over his head, and conjured to his mind's eye the former power and grandeur of his race—that warlike people who, forsaking their own country for causes of which no tradition, however dim, now exists, sought in the fruitful and teeming valleys of the south a soil and climate which their own lands did not afford; and, displacing the wild and barbarous hordes inhabiting the land, raised there a mighty empire, great in riches and civilisation.

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* The Aztecs are supposed to have built this city during their migration to the south; there is little doubt, however, but that the region extending from the Gila to the Great Salt Lake, and embracing the province of New Mexico, was the locality from which they emigrated.

The Indian bowed his head, and mourned the fallen greatness of his tribe. Rising, he slowly drew his tattered blanket round his body, and prepared to leave the spot, when the shadow of a moving figure, creeping past a gap in the ruined wall, through which the moonbeams played, suddenly arrested his attention. Rigid as a statue, he stood transfixed to the spot, thinking a former inhabitant of the city was visiting, in a ghostly form, the scenes his body once knew so well. The bow in his right hand shook with fear as he saw the shadow approach, but was as tightly and steadily grasped when, on the figure emerging from the shade of the wall, he distinguished the form of a naked Apache, armed with bow and arrow, crawling stealthily through the gloomy ruins.

Standing undiscovered within the shadow of the wall, the Taos raised his bow, and drew an arrow to the head, until the other, who was bending low to keep under cover of the wall, and thus approach the sentinel standing at a short distance, seeing suddenly the well-defined shadow on the ground, rose upright on his legs, and, knowing escape was impossible, threw his arms down his sides, and, drawing himself erect, exclaimed, in a suppressed tone, "Wa-g-h!"

"Wagh!" exclaimed the Taos likewise, but quickly dropped his arrow point, and eased the bow.

"What does my brother want," he asked, "that he lopes like a wolf round the fires of the white hunters?"

"Is my brother's skin not red?" returned the Apache, "and yet he asks a question that needs no answer. Why does the 'medicine wolf' follow the buffalo and deer? For blood—and for blood the Indian follows the treacherous white from camp to camp, to strike blow for blow, until the deaths of those so basely killed are fully avenged."

"My brother speaks with a big heart, and his words are true; and though the Taos and Pimo (Apache) black their faces towards each other (are at war), here, on the graves of their common fathers, there is peace between them. Let my brother go."

The Apache moved quickly away, and the Taos once more sought the camp-fires of his white companions.

Following the course of the Gila to the eastward, they crossed a range of the Sierra Madre, which is a continuation of the Rocky Mountains, and struck the waters of the Rio del Norte, below the settlements of New Mexico. On this stream they fared well; besides trapping a great quantity of beaver, game of all kinds abounded, and the bluffs near the well-timbered banks of the river were covered with rich gramma grass, on which their half-starved animals speedily improved in condition.

They remained for some weeks encamped on the right bank of the stream, during which period they lost one of their number, shot with an arrow whilst lying asleep within a few feet of the camp-fire.

The Navajos continually prowl along that portion of the river which runs through the settlements of New Mexico, preying upon the cowardly inhabitants, and running off with their cattle whenever they are exposed in sufficient numbers to tempt them. Whilst ascending the river, the trappers met a party of these Indians returning to their mountain homes with a large band of mules and horses which they had taken from one of the Mexican towns, besides several women and children, whom they had captured, as slaves. The main body of the trappers halting, ten of the band followed and charged upon the Indians, who numbered at least sixty, killed seven of them, and retook the prisoners and the whole cavallada of horses and mules. Great were the rejoicings when they entered Socorro, the town whence the women and children had been taken, and as loud the remonstrances, when, handing them over to their families, the trappers rode on, driving fifty of the best of the rescued animals before them, which they retained as payment for their services. Messengers were sent on to Albuquerque with intelligence of the proceeding; and as troops were stationed there, the commandant was applied to, to chastise the insolent whites.

That warrior, on learning that the trappers numbered less than fifteen, became alarmingly brave, and ordering out the whole of his disposable force, some two hundred dragoons, sallied out to intercept the audacious mountaineers. About noon one day, just as the latter had emerged from a little town between Socorro and Albuquerque, they descried the imposing force of the dragoons winding along a plain ahead. As the trappers advanced, the officer in command halted his men, and sent out a trumpeter to order the former to await his coming. Treating the herald to a roar of laughter, on they went, and, as they approached the soldiers, broke into a trot, ten of the number forming line in front of the packed and loose animals, and, rifle in hand, charging with loud whoops. This was enough for the New Mexicans. Before the enemy were within shooting distance, the gallant fellows turned tail, and splashed into the river, dragging themselves up the opposite bank like half-drowned rats, and saluted with loud peels of laughter by the victorious mountaineers, who, firing a volley into the air, in token of supreme contempt, quietly continued their route up the stream.

Before reaching the capital of the province, they struck again to the westward, and following a small creek to its junction with the Green River, ascended that stream, trapping *en route* to the Uintah or Snake Fork, and arrived at Roubideau's rendezvous early in the fall, where they quickly disposed of their peltries, and were once more on "the loose."

Here La Bonté married a Snake squaw, with whom he crossed the mountains and proceeded to the Platte through the Bayou Salade, where he purchased of the Yutas a commodious lodge, with the necessary poles, &c.; and being now "rich" in mules and horses, and in all things necessary for *otium cum dignitate*, he took unto himself another wife, as by mountain law allowed; and thus equipped, with both his better halves attired in all the glory of fofarraw, he went his way rejoicing.

In a snug little valley lying under the shadow of the mountains, watered by Vermilion Creek, and in which abundance of buffalo, elk, deer, and antelope fed and fattened on the rich grass, La Bonté raised his lodge, employing himself in hunting, and fully occupying his wives' time in dressing the skins of the many animals he killed. Here he enjoyed himself amazingly until the commencement of winter, when he determined to cross to the North Fork and trade his skins, of which he had now as many packs as his animals could carry. It happened that he one day left his camp, to spend a couple of days hunting buffalo in the mountains, whither the bulls were now resorting, intending to "put out" for Platte on his return. His hunt, however, led him farther into the mountains than he anticipated, and it was only on the third day that sundown saw him enter the little valley where his camp was situated.

Crossing the creek, he was not a little disturbed at seeing fresh Indian sign on the opposite side, which led in the direction of his lodge; and his worst fears were realised when, on coming within sight of the little plateau where the conical top of his white lodge had always before met his view, he saw nothing but a blackened mass strewing the ground, and the burnt ends of the poles which had once supported it.

Squaws, animals, and peltry, all were gone—an Arapaho moccasin lying on the ground told him where. He neither fumed nor fretted, but, throwing the meat off his pack animal, and the saddle from his horse, he collected the blackened ends of the lodge poles and made a fire—led his beasts to water and hobbled them, threw a piece of buffalo meat upon the coals, squatted down before the fire, and lit his pipe. La Bonté was a true philosopher. Notwithstanding that his house, his squaws, his peltries, were gone "at one fell swoop," the loss scarcely disturbed his equanimity; and before the tobacco in his pipe was half smoked out, he had ceased to think of his misfortune. Certes, as he turned his apolla of tender loin, he sighed as he thought of the delicate manipulations with which his Shoshone squaw, Sah-qua-manish, was wont to beat to tenderness the toughest bull meat—and missed the tending care of Yute Chil-co-thĕ, or the "reed that bends," in patching the holes worn in his neatly fitting moccasins, the work of her nimble fingers. However, he ate and smoked, and smoked and ate, and slept none the worse for his mishap; thought, before he closed his eyes, a little of his lost wives, and more perhaps of the "Bending Reed" than of Sah-qua-manish, or "she who runs with the stream," drew his blanket tightly round him, felt his rifle handy to his grasp, and was speedily asleep.

Whilst the tired mountaineer breathes heavily in his dream, careless and unconscious that a living soul is near, his mule on a sudden pricks her ears and stares into the gloom, whence a figure soon emerges, .and with noiseless steps draws near the sleeping hunter. Taking one look at the slumbering form, the same figure approaches the fire and adds a log to the pile; which done, it quietly seats itself at the feet of the sleeper, and remains motionless as a statue. Towards morning the hunter awoke, and, rubbing his eyes, was astonished to feel the glowing warmth of the fire striking on his naked feet, which, in Indian fashion, were stretched towards it; as by this time, he knew, the fire he left burning must long since have expired. Lazily raising himself on his elbow, he saw a figure sitting near it with the back turned to him, which, although his exclamatory wagh was loud enough in all conscience, remained perfectly motionless, until the trapper, rising, placed his hand upon the shoulder: then, turning up its face, the features displayed to his wondering eye were those of Chil-co-thē, his Yuta wife. Yes, indeed, the "reed that bends" had escaped from her Arapaho captors, and made her way back to her white husband, fasting and alone.

The Indian women who follow the fortunes of the white hunters are remarkable for their affection and fidelity to their husbands, the which virtues, it must be remarked, are all on their own side; for, with very few exceptions, the mountaineers seldom scruple to abandon their Indian wives, whenever the fancy takes them to change their harems; and on such occasions the squaws, thus cast aside, wild with jealousy and despair, have been not unfrequently known to take signal vengeance both on their faithless husbands and on the successful beauties who have supplanted them in their affections. There are some honourable exceptions, however, to such cruelty, and many of the mountaineers stick to their red-skinned wives for better and for worse, often suffering them to gain the upper hand in the domestic economy of the lodges, and being ruled by their better halves in all things pertaining to family affairs; and it may be remarked, that, when once the lady dons the unmentionables, she becomes the veriest termagant that ever henpecked an unfortunate husband.

Your refined trappers, however, who, after many years of bachelor life, incline to take to themselves a better half, often undertake an expedition into the settlements of New Mexico, where not unfrequently they adopt a very "Young Lochinvar" system in procuring the required rib; and have been known to carry off, *vi et armis*, from the midst of a fahdango in Fernandez, or El Rancho of Taos, some dark-skinned beauty—with or without her own consent is a matter of unconcern—and bear the ravished fair one across the mountains, where she soon becomes inured to the free and roving life fate has assigned her.

American women are valued at a low figure in the mountains. They are too fine and "fofarraw." Neither can they make moccasins, or dress skins; nor are they so schooled to perfect obedience to their lords and masters as to stand a "lodge-poleing," which the western lords of the creation not unfrequently deem it their bounden duty to inflict upon their squaws for some dereliction of domestic duty.

To return, however, to La Bonté. That worthy thought himself a lucky man to have lost but one of his wives, and she the worst of the two. "Here's the beauty," he philosophised, "of having two 'wiping-sticks' to your rifle; if one breaks whilst ramming down a ball, there's still hickory left to supply its place." Although, with animals and peltry, he had lost several hundred dollars' worth of "possibles," he never groaned or grumbled.

" There's redskin will pay for this," he once muttered, and was done.

Packing all that was left on the mule, and mounting Chil-co-thē on his buffalo horse, he shouldered his rifle and struck the Indian trail for Platte. On Horse Creek they came upon a party of French* trappers and hunters, who were encamped with their lodges and Indian squaws, and formed quite a village. Several old companions were amongst them; and, to celebrate the arrival of a "camarade," a splendid dog-feast was prepared in honour of the event. To effect this, the squaws sallied out of their lodges to seize upon sundry of the younger and plumper of the pack, to fill the kettles for the approaching feast. With a presentiment of the fate in store for them, the curs slunk away with tails between their legs, and declined the pressing invitations of the anxious squaws. These shouldered their tomahawks and gave chase; but the cunning pups outstripped them, and would have fairly beaten the kettles, if some of the mountaineers had not stepped out with their rifles and quickly laid half-a-dozen ready to the knife. A cayeute, attracted by the scent of blood, drew near, unwitting of the canine feast in progress, and was likewise soon made *dog* of, and thrust into the boiling kettle with the rest.

The feast that night was long protracted; and so savoury was the stew, and so agreeable to the palates of the hungry hunters, that at the moment the last morsel was drawn from the pot, when all were regretting that a few more dogs had not been slaughtered, a wolfish-looking cur, who incautiously poked his long nose and head under the lodge skin, was pounced upon by the nearest hunter, who in a moment drew his knife across the animal's throat, and threw it to a squaw to skin and prepare for the pot. The wolf had long since been vigorously discussed, and voted by all hands to be "good as dog."

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* Creoles of St Louis, and French Canadians.

"Meat's meat," is a common saying in the mountains, and from the buffalo down to the rattlesnake, including every quadruped that runs, every fowl that flies, and every reptile that creeps, nothing comes amiss to the mountaineer. Throwing aside all the qualms and conscientious scruples of a fastidious stomach, it must be confessed that *dog-meat* takes a high rank in the wonderful variety of cuisine afforded to the gourmand and the gourmet by the prolific "mountains." Now, when the bill of fare offers such tempting viands as buffalo beef, venison, mountain mutton, turkey, grouse, wildfowl, hares, rabbits, beaver and their tails, &c. &c., the station assigned to "dog" as No. 2 in the list can be well appreciated—No. 1, in delicacy of flavour, richness of meat, and other good qualities, being the flesh of *panthers*, which surpasses every other, and all put together.

"Painter meat can't 'shine' with this," says a hunter, to express the delicious flavour of an extraordinary cut of "tender loin," or delicate fleece.

La Bonté started with his squaw for the North Fork early in November, and arrived at the Laramie at the moment that the big village of the Sioux came up for their winter trade. Two other villages were encamped lower down the Platte, including the Brulés and the Yanka-taus, who were now on more friendly terms with the whites. The first band numbered several hundred lodges, and presented quite an imposing appearance, the village being laid out in parallel lines, the lodge of each chief being marked with his particular totem. The traders had a particular portion of the village allotted to them, and a line was marked out which was strictly kept by the soldiers appointed for the protection of the whites. As there were many rival traders, and numerous *coureurs des bois*, or peddling ones, the market promised to be brisk, the more so as a large quantity of ardent spirits was in their possession, which would be dealt with no unsparing hand to put down the opposition of so many competing traders.

In opening a trade a quantity of liquor is first given "on the prairie,"* as the Indians express it in words, or by signs in rubbing the palm of one hand quickly across the other, holding both flat. Having once tasted the pernicious liquid, there is no fear but they will quickly come to terms; and not unfrequently the spirit is drugged, to render the unfortunate Indians still more helpless. Sometimes, maddened and infuriated by drink, they commit the most horrid atrocities on each other, murdering and mutilating in a barbarous manner, and often attempting the lives of the traders themselves. On one occasion a band of Sioux, whilst under the influence of liquor, attacked and took possession of a trading fort of the American Fur Company, stripping it of every thing it contained, and roasting the trader himself over his own fire.

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* "On the prairie," is the Indian term for a free gift.

The principle on which the nefarious trade is conducted is this, that the Indians, possessing a certain quantity of buffalo robes, have to be cheated out of them, and the sooner the better. Although it is explicitly prohibited by the laws of the United States to convey spirits across the Indian frontier, and its introduction amongst the Indian tribes subjects the offender to a heavy penalty; yet the infraction of this law is of daily occurrence, perpetrated almost in the very presence of the government officers, who are stationed along the frontier for the purpose of enforcing the laws for the protection of the Indians.

The misery entailed upon these unhappy people by the illicit traffic must be seen to be fully appreciated. Before the effects of the poisonous "fire-water," they disappear from the earth like "snow before the sun." Although aware of the destruction it entails upon them, the poor wretches have not moral courage to shun the fatal allurement it holds out to them, of wild excitement and a temporary oblivion of their many sufferings and privations. With such palpable effects, it appears only likely that the illegal trade is connived at by those whose policy it has ever been, gradually but surely, to exterminate the Indians, and by any means to extinguish their title to the few lands they now own on the outskirts of civilisation. Certain it it is that large quantities of liquor find their way annually into the Indian country, and as certain are the fatal results of the pernicious system, and that the American government takes no steps to prevent it. There are some tribes who have as yet withstood the great temptation, and have resolutely refused to permit liquor to be brought into their villages. The marked difference between the improved condition of these, and the moral and physical abasement of those which give way to the fatal passion for drinking, sufficiently proves the pernicious effects of the liquor trade on the unfortunate and abused aborigines; and it is matter of regret that no philanthropist has sprung up in the United States to do battle for the rights of the Red men, and call attention to the wrongs they endure at the hands of their supplanters in the lands of their fathers.

Robbed of their homes and hunting-grounds, and driven by the encroachments of the whites to distant regions, which hardly support existence, the Indians, day by day, gradually decrease before the accumulating evils, of body and soul, which their civilised persecutors entail upon them. With every man's hand against them, they drag on to their final destiny; and the day is not far distant when the American Indian will exist only in the traditions of his pale-faced conquerors.

The Indians trading at this time on the Platte were mostly of the Sioux nation, including the tribes of Burnt-woods, Yanka-taus, Pian-Kashas, Assinaboins, Oglallahs, Broken Arrows, all of which belong to the great Sioux nation, or La-cotahs, as they call themselves, and which means cut-throats. There were also some Cheyennes allied to the Sioux, as well as a small band of Republican Pawnees.

Horse-racing, gambling, and ball-play, served to pass away the time until the trade commenced, and many packs of dressed robes changed hands amongst themselves. When playing at the usual game of "*hand*," the stakes, comprising all the valuables the players possess, are piled in two heaps close at hand, the winner at the conclusion of the game sweeping the goods towards him, and often returning a small portion "on the prairie," with which the loser may again commence operations with another player.

The game of "hand" is played by two persons. One, who commences, places a plum or cherry-stone in the hollow formed by joining the concaved palms of the hands together, then shaking the stone for a few moments, the hands are suddenly separated, and the other player must guess which hand now contains the stone.

Large bets are often wagered on the result of this favourite game, which is also often played by the squaws, the men standing round encouraging them to bet, and laughing loudly at their grotesque excitement.

A Burnt-wood Sioux, Tah-tunganisha, one of the bravest chiefs of his tribe, was out, when a young man, on a solitary war expedition against the Crows. One evening he drew near a certain "medicine" spring, where, to his astonishment, he encountered a Crow warrior in the act of quenching his thirst. He was on the point of drawing his bow upon him, when he remembered the sacred nature of the spot, and making the sign of peace, he fearlessly drew near his foe, and proceeded likewise to slake his thirst. A pipe of kinnik-kinnik being produced, it was proposed to pass away the early part of the night in a game of "hand." They accordingly sat down beside the spring, and commenced the game.

Fortune favoured the Crow. He won arrow after arrow from the Burnt-wood brave; then his bow, his club, his knife, his robe, all followed, and the Sioux sat naked on the plain. Still he proposed another stake against the other's [illegible]nings—his scalp. He played, and lost; and bending forward his head, the Crow warrior drew his knife and quickly removed the bleeding prize. Without a murmur the luckless Sioux rose to depart, but first exacted a promise from his antagonist that he would meet him once more at the same spot, and engage in another trial of skill.

On the day appointed, the Burnt-wood sought the spot, with a new equipment, and again the Crow made his appearance, and they sat down to play. This time fortune changed sides; the Sioux won back his former losses, and in his turn the Crow was stripped to his skin.

Scalp against scalp was now the stake, and this time the Crow submitted his head to the victorious Burnt-wood's knife; and both the warriors stood scalpless on the plain.

And now the Crow had but one single stake of value to offer, and the offer of it he did not hesitate to make. He staked his life against the other's winnings. They played; and fortune still being adverse, he lost. He offered his breast to his adversary. The Burnt-wood plunged his knife into his heart to the very hilt; and, laden with his spoils, returned to his village, and to this day wears suspended from his ears his own and enemy's scalp.

The village presented the usual scene of confusion as long as the trade lasted. Fighting, brawling, yelling, dancing, and all the concomitants of

intoxication, continued to the last drop of the liquor-keg, when the reaction after such excitement was almost worse than the evil itself. During this time, all the work devolved upon the squaws, who, in tending the horses, and in packing wood and water from a long distance, had their time sufficiently occupied. As there was little or no grass in the vicinity, the animals were supported entirely on the bark of the cotton-wood; and to procure this, the women were daily engaged in felling huge trees, or climbing them fearlessly, chopping off the upper limbs—springing like squirrels from branch to branch, which, in their confined costume, appeared matter of considerable difficulty.

The most laughter-provoking scenes, however, were, when a number of squaws sallied out to the grove, with their long-nosed, wolfish-looking dogs harnessed to their *travées* or trabogans, on which loads of cotton-wood were piled. The dogs, knowing full well the duty required of them, refuse to approach the coaxing squaws, and, at the same time, are fearful of provoking their anger by escaping and running off. They, therefore, squat on their haunches, with tongues hanging out of their long mouths, the picture of indecision, removing a short distance as the irate squaw approaches. When once harnessed to the travée, however, which is simply a couple of lodge-poles lashed on either side of the dog, with a couple of cross-bars near the ends to support the freight, they follow quietly enough, urged by bevies of children, who invariably accompany the women. Once arrived at the scene of their labours, the reluctance of the curs to draw near the piles of cotton-wood is most comical. They will lie down stubbornly at a little distance, whining their uneasiness, or sometimes scamper off bodily, with their long poles trailing after them, pursued by the yelling and half frantic squaws.

When the travées are laden, the squaws, bent double under loads of wood sufficient to break a porter's back, and calling to the dogs, which are urged on by the buffalo-fed urchins in rear, lead the line of march. The curs, taking advantage of the helpless state of their mistresses, turn a deaf ear to their coaxings, lying down every few yards to rest, growling and fighting with each other, in which encounters every cur joins the *mêlée*, charging pell-mell into the yelping throng, upsetting the squalling children, and making confusion worse confounded. Then, armed with lodge-poles, the squaws, throwing down their loads, rush to the rescue, dealing stalwart blows on the pugnacious curs, and finally restoring something like order to the march.

" Tszoo—tszoo !" they cry, " wah, kashne, ceitcha—get on, you devilish beasts—tszoo—tszoo !" and belabouring them without mercy, they start them into a gallop, which, once commenced, is generally continued till they reach their destination.

The Indian dogs are, however, invariably well treated by the squaws, since they assist materially the every-day labours of these patient over-worked creatures, in hauling firewood to the lodge, and, on the line of march, carrying many of the household goods and chattels, which otherwise the squaw herself would have to carry on her back. Every lodge possesses from half-a-dozen to a score—some for draught and others for eating—for dog meat forms part and parcel of an Indian feast. The former are stout, wiry animals, half wolf half sheep-dog, and are regularly trained to draught; the latter are of a smaller kind, more inclined to fat, and embrace every variety of the genus cur. Many of the southern tribes possess a breed of dogs entirely divested of hair, which evidently have come from South America, and are highly esteemed for the kettle. Their meat, in appearance and flavour, resembles young pork, but far surpasses it in richness and delicacy.

The Sioux are very expert in making their lodges comfortable, taking more pains in their construction than most Indians. They are all of conical form: a framework of straight slender poles, resembling hop-poles, and from twenty to twenty-five feet long, is first erected, round which is stretched a sheeting of buffalo robes, softly dressed, and smoked to render them water-tight. The apex, through which the ends of the poles protrude, is left open to allow the smoke to escape. A small opening, sufficient to permit the entrance of a man, is made on one side, over which is hung a door of buffalo hide. A lodge of the common size contains about twelve or fourteen skins, and contains comfortably a family of twelve in number. The fire is made in the centre immediately under the aperture in the roof, and a flap of the upper skins is closed or extended at pleasure, serving as a cowl or chimney-top to regulate the draught and permit the smoke to escape freely. Round the fire, with their feet towards it, the inmates sleep on skins and buffalo rugs, which are rolled up during the day, and stowed at the back of the lodge.

In travelling, the lodge-poles are secured half on each side a horse, and the skins placed on transversal bars near the ends, which trail along the ground, —two or three squaws or children mounted on the same horse, or the smallest of the latter borne in the dog travées. A set of lodge-poles will last from three to seven years, unless the village is constantly on the move, when they are soon worn out in trailing over the gravelly prairie. They are usually of ash, which grows on many of the mountain creeks, and regular expeditions are undertaken when a supply is required, either for their own lodges, or for trading with those tribes who inhabit the prairies at a great distance from the locality where the poles are procured.

There are also certain creeks where the Indians resort to lay in a store of kinnik-kinnik (the inner bark of the red willow), which they use as a substitute for tobacco, and which has an aromatic and very pungent flavour. It is prepared for smoking by being scraped in thin curly flakes from the slender saplings, and crisped before the fire, after which it is rubbed between the hands into a form resembling leaf-tobacco, and stored in skin bags for use. It has a highly narcotic effect on those not habituated to its use, and produces a heaviness sometimes approaching stupefaction, altogether different from the soothing effects of tobacco.

Every year, owing to the disappearance of the buffalo from their former haunts, the Indians are compelled to encroach upon each other's hunting-grounds, which is a fruitful cause of war between the different tribes. It is a curious fact, that the buffalo retire before the whites, whilst the presence of Indians in their pastures appears in no degree to disturb them. Wherever a few white hunters are congregated in a trading port, or elsewhere, so sure it is that, if they remain in the same locality, the buffalo will desert the vicinity, and seek pasture elsewhere. In this, the Indians affirm, the wah-keitcha, or "bad medicine," of the pale-faces is very apparent; and they ground upon it their well-founded complaints of the encroachments made upon their hunting-grounds by the white hunters.

In the winter, many of the tribes are reduced to the very verge of starvation—the buffalo having passed from their country into that of their enemies, when no other alternative is offered them, but to remain where they are and starve, or to follow the game into a hostile region, a move entailing war and all its horrors.

Reckless, moreover, of the future, in order to prepare robes for the traders, and to procure the pernicious fire-water, they wantonly slaughter, every year, vast numbers of buffalo cows (the skins of which sex only are dressed), and thus add to the evils in store for them. When questioned on this subject, and reproached with such want of foresight, they answer, that however quickly the buffalo disappears, the Red man "goes under" more quickly still; and that the Great Spirit has ordained that both shall be "rubbed out" from the face of nature at one and the same time,—"that arrows and bullets are not more fatal to the buffalo than the small-pox and fire-water to them, and that before many winters' snows have disappeared, the buffalo and the Red man will only be remembered by their bones, which will strew the plains."—"They look forward, however, to a future state, when, after a long journey, they will reach the happy hunting-grounds, where buffalo will once more blacken the prairies; where the pale-faces dare not come to disturb them; where no winter snows cover the ground, and the buffalo are always plentiful and fat."

As soon as the streams opened, La Bonté, now reduced to two animals and four traps, sallied forth again, this time seeking the dangerous country of the Blackfeet, on the head waters of the Yellow Stone and Upper Missouri. He was accompanied by three others, a man named Wheeler, and one Cross-Eagle, a Swede, who had been many years in the western country. Reaching the forks of a small creek, on both of which appeared plenty of beaver sign, La Bonté followed the left-hand one alone, whilst the others trapped the right in company, the former leaving his squaw in the company of a Sioux woman, who followed the fortunes of Cross-Eagle, the party agreeing to rendezvous at the junction of the two forks as soon as they had trapped to their heads and again descended them. The larger party were the first to reach the rendezvous, and camped on the banks of the main stream to await the arrival of La Bonté.

The morning after their return, they had just risen from their blankets, and were lazily stretching themselves before the fire, when a volley of fire-arms rattled from the bank of the creek, and two of their number fell dead to the ground, whilst at the same moment the deafening yells of Indians broke upon the ears of the frightened squaws. Cross-Eagle seized his rifle, and, though severely wounded, rushed to the cover of a hollow tree which stood near, and crawling into it, defended himself the whole day with the greatest obstinacy, killing five Indians outright, and wounding several more. Unable to drive the gallant trapper from his retreat, the savages took advantage of a favourable wind which suddenly sprang up, and fired the long dry grass surrounding the tree. The rotten log catching fire, at length compelled the hunter to leave his retreat. Clubbing his rifle, he charged amongst the Indians, and fell at last, pierced through and through with wounds, but not until two more of his assailants had fallen by his hand.

The two squaws were carried off, and one was sold shortly afterwards to some white men at the trading ports on the Platte; but La Bonté never recovered the "Bending Reed," nor even heard of her existence from that day. So once more was the mountaineer bereft of his better half; and when he returned to the rendezvous, a troop of wolves were feasting on the bodies of his late companions, and of the Indians killed in the affray, of which he only heard the particulars a long time after from a trapper, who had been present when one of the squaws was offered at the trading post for sale, and had heard her recount the miserable fate of her husband and his companions on the forks of the creek, which, from the fact of La Bonté being the leader of the party, has since borne his name.

Undaunted by this misfortune, the trapper continued his solitary hunt, passing through the midst of the Crow and Blackfeet country; encountering many perils, often hunted by the Indians, but always escaping. He had soon loaded both his animals with beaver, and then thought of bending his steps to some of the trading rendezvous on the other side of the mountains, where employés of the Great Northwest Fur Company meet the trappers with the produce of their hunts, on Lewis's fork of the Columbia, or one of its numerous affluents. His intention was to pass the winter at some of the company's trading posts in Oregon, into which country he had never yet penetrated.

CHAPTER V.

We have said that La Bonté was a philosopher: he took the streaks of ill luck which checkered his mountain life with perfect carelessness, if not with stoical indifference. Nothing ruffled his danger-steeled equanimity of temper; no sudden emotion disturbed his mind. We have seen how wives were torn from him without eliciting a groan or grumble, (but such *contretemps*, it may be said, can scarcely find a place in the category of ills); how the loss of mules and mustangs, harried by horse-stealing Indians, left him in the *ne-plus-ultra* of mountain misery—"afoot;" how packs and peltries, the hard-earned "beaver" of his perilous hunts, were "raised" at one fell swoop by free-booting bands of savages. Hunger and thirst, we know, were commonplace sensations to the mountaineer. His storm-hardened flesh scarce felt the pinging wounds of arrow-point or bullet; and when in the midst of Indian fight, it is not probable that any tender qualms of feeling would allay the itching of his fingers for his enemy's scalp-lock, nor would any remains of civilised fastidiousness prevent his burying his knife again and again in the life-blood of an Indian savage.

Still, in one dark corner of his heart, there shone at intervals a faint spark of what was once a fiercely-burning fire. Neither time, that corroder of all things, nor change, that ready abettor of oblivion, nor scenes of peril and excitement, which act as dampers to more quiet memories, could smother this little smouldering spark, which now and again —when rarely-coming calm succeeded some stirring passage in the hunter's life, and left him, for a brief time, devoid of care, and victim to his thoughts—would flicker suddenly, and light up all the nooks and corners of his rugged breast, and discover to his mind's eye that one deep-rooted memory clung there still, though long neglected; proving that, spite of time and change, of life and fortune,

"On revient tojours à ses premiers amours."

Often and often as La Bonté sat cross-legged before his solitary camp-fire, and, pipe in mouth, watched the blue smoke curling upwards in the clear cold sky, a well-remembered form appeared to gaze upon him from the vapoury wreaths. Then would old recollections crowd before him, and old emotions, long a stranger to his breast, shape themselves, as it were, into long-forgotten but now familiar pulsations. Again he felt the soft subduing influence which once, in days gone by, a certain passion exercised over his mind and body; and often a trembling seized him, the same he used to experience at the sudden sight of one Mary Brand, whose dim and dreamy apparition so often watched his lonely bed, or, unconsciously conjured up, cheered him in the dreary watches of the long and stormy winter nights.

At first he only knew that one face haunted his dreams by night, and the few moments by day when he thought of any thing, and this face smiled lovingly upon him, and cheered him mightily. Name he had quite forgotten, or recalled it vaguely, and, setting small store by it, had thought of it no more.

For many years after he had deserted his home, La Bonté had cherished the idea of again returning to his country. During this period he had never forgotten his old flame, and many a choice fur he had carefully laid by, intended as a present for Mary Brand; and many a *gâge d'amour* of cunning shape and device, worked in stained quills of porcupine and bright-coloured beads—the handiwork of nimble-fingered squaws—he had packed in his possible sack for the same destination, hoping a time would come when he might lay them at her feet.

Year after year wore on, however, and still found him, with traps and rifle, following his perilous avocation; and each succeeding one saw him more and more wedded to the wild mountain-life. He was conscious how unfitted he had become again to enter the galling harness of conventionality and civilisation. He thought, too, how changed in manners and appearance he now must be, and could not believe that he would again find favour in the eyes of his quondam love, who, he judged, had long since forgotten him; and inexperienced as he was in such matters, yet he knew enough of womankind to feel assured that time and absence had long since done the work, if even the natural fickleness of woman's nature had lain dormant. Thus it was that he came to forget Mary Brand, but still remembered the all-absorbing feeling she had once created in his breast, the shadow of which still remained, and often took form and feature in the smoke-wreaths of his solitary camp-fire.

If truth be told, La Bonté had his failings as a mountaineer, and—sin unpardonable in hunter law—still possessed, in holes and corners of his breast seldom explored by his inward eye, much of the leaven of kindly human nature, which now and again involuntarily peeped out, as greatly to the contempt of his comrade trappers as it was blushingly repressed by the mountaineer himself. Thus, in his various matrimonial episodes, he treated his dusky *sposas* with all the consideration the sex could possibly demand from hand of man. No squaw of his ever humped shoulder to receive a castigatory and marital "lodge-poling" for offence domestic; but often has his helpmate blushed to see her pale-face lord and master devote himself to the feminine labour of packing huge piles of fire-wood on his back, felling trees, butchering unwieldy buffalo—all which are included in the Indian category of female duties. Thus he was esteemed an excellent *parti* by all the marriageable young squaws of Blackfoot, Crow, and Shoshone, of Yutah, Shian, and Arapaho; but after his last connubial catastrophe, he steeled his heart against all the charms and coquetry of Indian belles, and persevered in unblessed widowhood for many a long day.

From the point where we left him on his way to the waters of the Columbia, we must jump with him over a space of nearly two years, during which time he had a most uninterrupted run of good luck; trapping with great success on the head streams of the Columbia and Yellow Stone—the most dangerous of trapping ground—and finding good market for his peltries at the "North-west" posts—beaver fetching as high a price as five and six dollars a "plew"—the "golden age" of trappers, now, alas, never to return, and existing only in the fond memory of the mountaineers. This glorious time, however, was too good to last. In mountain language, "such heap of fat meat was not going to 'shine' much longer."

La Bonté was at this time one of a band of eight trappers, whose hunting ground was about the head waters of the Yellow Stone, which we have before said is in the country of the Blackfeet. With him were Killbuck, Meek, Marcellin, and three others; and the leader of the party was Bill

Williams, that old "hard case" who had spent forty years and more in the mountains, until he had become as tough as the parflêche soles of his moccasins. They were all good men and true, expert hunters, and well-trained mountaineers. After having trapped all the streams they were acquainted with, it was determined to strike into the mountains, at a point where old Williams affirmed, from the "run" of the hills, there must be plenty of water, although not one of the party had before explored the country, or knew any thing of its nature, or of the likelihood of its affording game for themselves or pasture for their animals. However, they packed their peltry, and put out for the land in view—a lofty peak, dimly seen above the more regular summit of the chain, being their landmark.

For the first day or two their route lay between two ridges of mountains, and by following the little valley which skirted a creek, they kept on level ground, and saved their animals considerable labour and fatigue. Williams always rode ahead, his body bent over his saddle-horn, across which rested a long heavy rifle, his keen gray eyes peering from under the slouched brim of a flexible felt-hat, black and shining with grease. His buckskin hunting-shirt, bedaubed until it had the appearance of polished leather, hung in folds over his bony carcass; his nether extremities being clothed in pantaloons of the same material (with scattered fringes down the outside of the leg—which ornaments, however, had been pretty well thinned to supply "whangs" for mending moccasins or pack-saddles), which, shrunk with wet, clung tightly to his long, spare, sinewy legs. His feet were thrust into a pair of Mexican stirrups made of wood, and as big as coal-scuttles; and iron spurs of incredible proportions, with tinkling drops attached to the rowels, were fastened to his heel—a bead-worked strap, four inches broad, securing them over the instep. In the shoulder-belt which sustained his powder-horn and bullet-pouch, were fastened the various instruments essential to one pursuing his mode of life. An awl, with deer-horn handle, and the point defended by a case of cherry-wood carved by his own hand, hung at the back of the belt, side by side with a worm for cleaning the rifle; and under this was a squat and quaint-looking bullet-mould, the handles guarded by strips of buckskin to save his fingers from burning when running balls, having for its companion a little bottle made from the point of an antelope's horn, scraped transparent, which contained the "medicine" used in baiting the traps. The old coon's face was sharp and thin, a long nose and chin hob-nobbing each other; and his head was always bent forward giving him the appearance of being hump-backed. He *appeared* to look neither to the right nor left, but, in fact, his little twinkling eye was everywhere. He looked at no one he was addressing, always seeming to be thinking of something else than the subject of his discourse, speaking in a whining, thin, cracked voice, and in a tone that left the hearer in doubt whether he was laughing or crying. On the present occasion he had joined this band, and naturally assumed the leadership (for Bill ever refused to go in harness), in opposition to his usual practice, which was to hunt alone. His character was well known. Acquainted with every inch of the Far West, and with all the Indian tribes who inhabited it, he never failed to outwit his Red enemies, and generally made his appearance at the rendezvous, from his solitary expeditions, with galore of beaver, when numerous bands of trappers dropped in on foot, having been despoiled of their packs and animals by the very Indians through the midst of whom old Williams had contrived to pass unseen and unmolested. On occasions when he had been in company with others, and attacked by Indians, Bill invariably fought manfully, and with all the coolness that perfect indifference to death or danger could give, but always "on his own hook." His rifle cracked away merrily, and never spoke in vain; and in a charge—if ever it came to that—his keen-edged butcher-knife tickled the fleece of many a Blackfoot. But at the same time, if he saw that discretion was the better part of valour, and affairs wore so cloudy an aspect as to render retreat advisable, he would first express his opinion in curt terms, and decisively, and, charging up his rifle, would take himself off and "cache"* so effectually that to search for him was utterly useless. Thus, when with a large party of trappers, when any thing occurred which gave him a hint that trouble was coming, or more Indians were about than he considered good for his animals, Bill was wont to exclaim—

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* Hide—from *cacher*.

"Do 'ee hyar now, boys, thar's sign about? this hos feels like caching;" and, without more words, and stoically deaf to all remonstrances, he would forthwith proceed to pack his animals, talking the while to an old, crop-eared, raw-boned Nez-percé pony, his own particular saddle-horse, who in dogged temper and iron hardiness, was a worthy companion of his self-willed master. This beast, as Bill seized his apishamore to lay upon its galled back, would express displeasure by humping its back and shaking its withers with a wincing motion, that always excited the ire of the old trapper; and no sooner had he laid the apishamore smoothly on the chafed skin, than a wriggle of the animal shook it off.

"Do 'ee hyar now, you darned crittur?" he would whine out, "can't 'ee keep quiet your old fleece now? Isn't this old coon putting out to save 'ee from the darned Injuns now, do 'ee hyar?" And then, continuing his work and taking no notice of his comrades, who stood by bantering the eccentric old trapper, he would soliloquise—"Do 'ee hyar, now? This niggur sees sign ahead—he does; he'll be afoot afore long, if he don't keep his eye skinned,—*he* will. *Injuns* is all about, they ar': Blackfoot at that. Can't come round this child—they can't, wagh!" And at last, his pack animals securely tied to the tail of his horse, he would mount, and throwing the rifle across the horn of his saddle, and without noticing his companions, would drive the jingling spurs into his horse's gaunt sides, and muttering, "Can't come round this child—they can't!" would ride away; and nothing more would be seen or heard of him perhaps for months, when they would not unfrequently, themselves bereft of animals in the scrape he had foreseen, find him located in some solitary valley, in his lonely camp, with his animals securely picketed around, and his peltries safe.

However, if he took it into his head to keep company with a party, all felt perfectly secure under his charge. His iron frame defied fatigue, and, at night, his love for himself and his own animals was sufficient guarantee that the camp would be well guarded. As he rode ahead, his spurs jingling, and thumping the sides of his old horse at every step, he managed, with admirable dexterity, to take advantage of the best line of country to follow—avoiding the gullies and cañons and broken ground, which would otherwise have impeded his advance. This tact appeared instinctive, for he looked neither right nor left, whilst continuing a course as straight as possible at the foot of the mountains. In selecting a camping site, he displayed equal skill: wood, water, and grass began to fill his thoughts towards sundown, and when these three requisites for a camping ground presented themselves, old Bill sprang from his saddle, unpacked his animals in a twinkling, and hobbled them, struck fire and ignited a few chips (leaving the rest to pack in the wood), lit his pipe, and enjoyed himself. On one occasion, when passing through the valley, they had come upon a band of fine buffalo cows, and, shortly after camping, two of the party rode in with a good supply of fat fleece. One of the party was a "greenhorn" on his first hunt, fresh from a fort on Platte, and as yet uninitiated in the mysteries of mountain cooking. Bill, lazily smoking his pipe, called to him, as he happened to be nearest, to butcher off a piece of meat and put it in his pot. Markhead seized the fleece, and commenced innocently carving off a huge ration, when a gasping roar from the old trapper caused him to drop his knife.

"Ti-ya," growled Bill, "do 'ee hyar, now, you darned greenhorn, do 'ee spile fat cow like that whar you was raised? Them doins wont shine in this crowd, boy, do 'ee hyar, darned you? What! butcher meat across the grain! why, whar'll the blood be goin' to, you precious Spaniard? Down the grain, I say," he continued in a severe tone of rebuke, "and let your flaps be long, or out the juice'll run slick—do 'ee hyar, now?" But this heretical error nearly cost the old trapper his appetite, and all night long he grumbled his horror at seeing "fat cow spiled in that fashion."

When two or three days' journey brought them to the end of the valley, and they commenced the passage of the mountain, their march was obstructed by all kinds of obstacles; although they had chosen what appeared to be a gap in the chain, and what was in fact the only practicable passage in that vicinity. They followed the cañon of a branch of the Yellow Stone, where it entered the mountain; but from this point it became a torrent, and it was only by dint of incredible exertions that they reached the summit of the ridge. Game was exceedingly scarce in the vicinity, and they suffered extremely from hunger, having, on more than one occasion, recourse to the parflêche soles of their moccasins to allay its pangs. Old Bill, however, never grumbled; he chewed away at his shoes with relish even, and as long as he had a pipeful of tobacco in his pouch, was a happy man. Starvation was as yet far off, for all their animals were in existence; but as they were in a country where it was difficult to procure a remount, each trapper hesitated to sacrifice one of his horses to his appetite.

From the summit of the ridge, Bill recognised the country on the opposite side to that whence they had just ascended as familiar to him, and pronounced it to be full of beaver, as well as abounding in the less desirable commodity of Indians. This was the valley lying about the lakes now called Eustis and Biddle, in which are many thermal and mineral springs, well known to the trappers by the names of the Soda, Beer, and Brimstone Springs, and regarded by them with no little awe and curiosity, as being the breathing-places of his Satanic majesty—considered, moreover, to be the "biggest kind" of "medicine" to be found in the mountains. If truth be told, old Bill hardly relished the idea of entering this country, which he pronounced to be of "bad medicine" notoriety, but nevertheless agreed to guide them to the best trapping ground.

One day they reached a creek full of beaver sign, and determined to halt here and establish their headquarters, while they trapped in the neighbourhood. We must here observe, that at this period—which was one of considerable rivalry amongst the various trading companies in the Indian territory—the Indians, having become possessed of arms and ammunition in great quantities, had grown unusually daring and persevering in their attacks on the white hunters who passed through their country, and consequently the trappers were compelled to roam about in larger bands for mutual protection, which, although it made them less liable to open attack, yet rendered it more difficult for them to pursue their calling without being discovered; for, where one or two men might pass unseen, the broad trail of a large party, with its animals, was not likely to escape the sharp eyes of the cunning savages.

They had scarcely encamped when the old leader, who had sallied out a short distance from camp to reconnoitre the neighbourhood, returned with an Indian moccasin in his hand, and informed his companions that its late owner and others were about.

"Do 'ee hyar now, boys, thar's *Injuns* knocking round, and Blackfoot at that; but thar's plenty of beaver too, and this child means trapping any how."

His companions were anxious to leave such dangerous vicinity; but the old fellow, contrary to his usual caution, determined to remain where he was—saying that there were Indians all over the country for that matter; and as they had determined to hunt here, he had made up his mind too—which was conclusive, and all agreed to stop where they were, in spite of the Indians. La Bonté killed a couple of mountain sheep close to camp, and they feasted rarely on the fat mutton that night, and were unmolested by marauding Blackfeet.

The next morning, leaving two of their number in camp, they started in parties of two, to hunt for beaver sign and set their traps. Markhead paired with one Batiste, Killbuck and La Bonté formed another couple, Meek and Marcellin another; two Canadians trapped together, and Bill Williams and another remained to guard the camp: but this last, leaving Bill mending his moccasins, started off to kill a mountain sheep, a band of which animals was visible.

Markhead and his companion, the first couple on the list, followed a creek, which entered that on which they had encamped, about ten miles distant. Beaver sign was abundant, and they had set eight traps, when Markhead came suddenly upon fresh Indian sign, where squaws had passed through the shrubbery on the banks of the stream to procure water, as he knew from observing a large stone placed by them in the stream, on which to stand to enable them to dip their kettles in the deepest water. Beckoning to his companion to follow, and cocking his rifle, he carefully pushed aside the bushes, and noiselessly proceeded up the bank, when, creeping on hands and knees, he gained the top, and, looking from his hiding-place, descried three Indian huts standing on a little plateau near the creek. Smoke curled from the roofs of branches, but the skin doors were carefully closed, so that he was unable to distinguish the number of the inmates. At a little distance, however, he observed two or three squaws gathering wood, with the usual attendance of curs, whose acuteness in detecting the scent of strangers was much to be dreaded.

Markhead was a rash and daring young fellow, caring no more for Indians than he did for prairie dogs, and acting ever on the spur of the moment, and as his inclination dictated, regardless of consequences. He at once determined to enter the lodges, and attack the enemy, should any be there; and the other trapper was fain to join him in the enterprise. The lodges proved empty, but the fires were still burning, and meat cooking upon them, to which the hungry hunters did ample justice, besides helping themselves to whatever goods and chattels, in the shape of leather and moccasins, took their fancy.

Gathering their spoil into a bundle, they sought their horses, which they had left tied under cover of the timber on the banks of the creek; and, mounting, took the back trail, to pick up their traps and remove from so dangerous a neighbourhood. They were approaching the spot where the first trap was set, a thick growth of ash and quaking-ash concealing the stream, when Markhead, who was riding ahead, observed the bushes agitated, as if some animal was making its way through them. He instantly stopped his horse, and his companion rode to his side, to inquire the cause of this abrupt halt. They were within a few yards of the belt of shrubs which skirted the stream; and before Markhead had time to reply, a dozen swarthy heads and shoulders suddenly protruded from the leafy screen, and as many rifle-barrels and arrows were pointing at their breasts. Before the trappers had time to turn their horses and fly, a cloud of smoke burst from the thicket almost in their faces. Batiste, pierced with several balls, fell dead, and Markhead felt himself severely wounded. However, he struck the spurs into his horse; and as some half-score Blackfeet jumped with loud cries from their cover, he discharged his rifle amongst them, and galloped off, a volley of balls and arrows whistling after him. He drew no bit until he reined up at the camp-fire, where he found Bill quietly dressing a deer-skin. That worthy looked up from his work; and seeing Markhead's face streaming with blood, and the very unequivocal evidence of an Indian rencontre in the shape of an arrow sticking in his back, he asked,—"Do 'ee feel bad now, boy? Whar away you see them darned Blackfoot?"

"Well, pull this arrow out of my back, and may be I'll feel like telling," answered Markhead.

"Do 'ee hyar now! hold on till I've grained this cussed skin, will 'ee! Did 'ee ever see sich a darned pelt, now? it won't take the smoke any how I fix it." And Markhead was fain to wait the leisure of the imperturbable old trapper, before he was eased of his annoying companion.

Old Bill expressed no surprise or grief when informed of the fate of poor Batiste. He said it was "just like greenhorns, runnin' into them cussed Blackfoot;" and observed that the defunct trapper, being only a Vide-pôche, was "no account anyhow." Presently Killbuck and La Bonté galloped into camp, with another alarm of Indians. They had also been attacked suddenly by a band of Blackfeet, but, being in a more open country, had got clear off, after killing two of their assailants, whose scalps hung at the horns of their saddles. They had been in a different direction to that in which Markhead and his companion had proceeded, and, from the signs they had observed, expressed their belief that the country was alive with Indians. Neither of these men had been wounded. Presently the two Canadians made their appearance on the bluff, galloping with might and main to camp, and shouting "Indians, Indians," as they came. All being assembled, and a council held, it was determined to abandon the camp and neighbourhood immediately. Old Bill was already packing his animals, and as he pounded the saddle down on the withers of his old Rosinante, he muttered,—"Do 'ee hyar, now! this coon 'ull câche, *he* will." So mounting his horse, and leading his pack mule by a lariat, he bent over his saddle-horn, dug his ponderous rowels into the lank sides of his beast, and, without a word, struck up the bluff and disappeared.

The others, hastily gathering up their packs, and most of them having lost their traps, quickly followed his example, and "put out." On cresting the high ground which rose from the creek, they observed thin columns of smoke mounting into the air from many different points, the meaning of which they were at no loss to guess. However they were careful not to show themselves on elevated ground, keeping as much as possible under the banks of the creek, when such a course was practicable; but, the bluffs sometimes rising precipitously from the water, they were more than once compelled to ascend the banks, and continue their course along the uplands, whence they might easily be discovered by the Indians. It was nearly sundown when they left their camp, but they proceeded during the greater part of the night at as rapid a rate as possible; their progress, however, being greatly retarded as they advanced into the mountain, their route lying up stream. Towards morning they halted for a brief space, but started again as soon as daylight permitted them to see their way over the broken ground.

The creek now forced its way through a narrow cañon, the banks being thickly clothed with a shrubbery of cottonwood and quaking-ash. The mountain rose on each side, but not abruptly, being here and there broken into plateaus and shelving prairies. In a very thick bottom, sprinkled with coarse grass, they halted about noon, and removed the saddles and packs from their wearied animals, picketing them in the best spots of grass.

La Bonté and Killbuck, after securing their animals, left the camp to hunt, for they had no provisions of any kind; and a short distance beyond it, the former came suddenly upon a recent moccasin track in the timber. After examining it for a moment, he raised his head with a broad grin, and, turning to his companion, pointed into the cover, where, in the thickest part, they discerned the well-known figure of old Bill's horse, browsing upon the cherry bushes. Pushing through the thicket in search of the brute's master, La Bonté suddenly stopped short as the muzzle of a rifle-barrel gaped before his eyes at the distance of a few inches, whilst the thin voice of Bill muttered—

"Do 'ee hyar now, I was nigh giving 'ee h——: I *was* now. If I didn't think 'ee was Blackfoot, I'm dogged now." And not a little indignant was the old fellow that his câche had been so easily, though accidentally, discovered. However, he presently made his appearance in camp, leading his animals, and once more joined his late companions, not deigning to give any explanation as to why or wherefore he had deserted them the day before, merely muttering, "do 'ee hyar now, thar's trouble comin.' "

The two hunters returned after sundown with a black-tailed deer; and after eating the better part of the meat, and setting a guard, the party were glad to roll in their blankets and enjoy the rest they so much needed. They were undisturbed during the night; but at dawn of day the sleepers were roused by a hundred fierce yells, from the mountains enclosing the creek on which they had encamped. The yells were instantly followed by a ringing volley, the bullets thudding into the trees, and cutting the branches near them, but without causing any mischief. Old Bill rose from his blanket and shook himself, and exclaimed "Wagh!" as at that moment a ball plumped into the fire over which he was standing, and knocked the ashes about in a cloud. All the mountaineers seized their rifles and sprang to cover; but as yet it was not sufficiently light to show them their enemy, the bright flashes from the guns alone indicating their position. As morning dawned, however, they saw that both sides of the cañon were occupied by the Indians; and, from the firing, judged there must be at least a hundred warriors engaged in the attack. Not a shot had yet been fired by the trappers, but as the light increased, they eagerly watched for an Indian to expose himself, and offer a mark to their trusty rifles. La Bonté, Killbuck, and old Bill, lay a few yards distant from each other, flat on their faces, near the edge of the thicket, their rifles raised before them, and the barrels resting in the forks of convenient bushes. From their place of concealment to the position of the Indians—who, however, were scattered here and there, wherever a rock afforded them cover—was a distance of about a hundred and fifty yards, or within fair rifle-shot. The trappers were obliged to divide their force, since both sides of the creek were occupied; but, such was the nature of the ground, and the excellent cover afforded by the rocks and boulders, and clumps of dwarf pine and hemlock, that not a hand's-breadth of an Indian's body had yet been seen. Nearly opposite La Bonté, a shelving glade in the mountain side ended in an abrupt precipice, and at the very edge, and almost toppling over it, were several boulders, just of sufficient size to afford cover to a man's body. As

this bluff overlooked the trappers' position, it was occupied by the Indians, and every rock covered an assailant. At one point, just over where La Bonté and Killbuck were lying, two boulders lay together, with just sufficient interval to admit a rifle-barrel between them, and from this breastwork an Indian kept up a most annoying fire. All his shots fell in dangerous propinquity to one or other of the trappers, and already Killbuck had been grazed by one better directed than the others. La Bonté watched for some time in vain for a chance to answer this persevering marksman, and at length an opportunity offered, by which he was not long in profiting.

The Indian, as the light increased, was better able to discern his mark, and fired, and yelled every time he did so, with redoubled vigour. In his eagerness, and probably whilst in the act of taking aim, he leaned too heavily against the rock which covered him, and, detaching it from its position, down it rolled into the cañon, exposing his body by its fall. At the same instant, a wreath of smoke puffed from the bushes which concealed the trappers, and the crack of La Bonté's rifle spoke the first word of reply to the Indian challenge. A few feet behind the rock, fell the dead body of the Indian, rolling down the steep sides of the cañon, and only stopped by a bush at the very bottom, within a few yards of the spot where Markhead lay concealed in some high grass.

That daring fellow instantly jumped from his cover, and drawing his knife, rushed to the body, and in another moment held aloft the Indian's scalp, giving, at the same time, a triumphant whoop. A score of rifles were levelled and discharged at the intrepid mountaineer; but in the act many Indians incautiously exposed themselves, every rifle in the timber cracked simultaneously, and for each report an Indian bit the dust.

Now, however, they changed their tactics. Finding they were unable to drive the trappers from their position, they retired from the mountain, and the firing suddenly ceased. In their retreat they were forced to expose themselves, and again the whites dealt destruction amongst them. As the Indians retired, yelling loudly, the hunters thought they had given up the contest; but presently a cloud of smoke rising from the bottom immediately below them, at once discovered the nature of their plans. A brisk wind was blowing up the cañon; and, favoured by it, they fired the brush on the banks of the stream, knowing that before this the hunters must speedily retreat.

Against such a result, but for the gale of wind which drove the fire roaring before it, they could have provided—for your mountaineer never fails to find resources on a pinch. They would have fired the brush to leeward of their position, and also carefully ignited that to windward, or between them and the advancing flame, extinguishing it immediately when a sufficient space had thus been cleared, over which the flame could not leap, and thus cutting themselves off from it both above and below their position. In the present instance they could not profit by such a course, as the wind was so strong that, if once the bottom caught fire, they would not be able to extinguish it; besides which, in the attempt, they would so expose themselves that they would be picked off by the Indians without difficulty. As it was, the fire came roaring before the wind with the speed of a race-horse, and, spreading from the bottom, licked the mountain sides, the dry grass burning like tinder. Huge volumes of stifling smoke rolled before it, and, in a very few minutes, the trappers were hastily mounting their animals, driving the packed ones before them. The dense clouds of smoke concealed every thing from their view, and, to avoid this, they broke from the creek and galloped up the sides of the cañon on to the more level plateau. As they attained this, a band of mounted Indians charged them. One, waving a red blanket, dashed through the cavallada, and was instantly followed by all the loose animals of the trappers, the rest of the Indians pursuing with loud shouts. So sudden was the charge, that the whites had not power to prevent the stampede. Old Bill, as usual, led his pack mules by the lariat; but the animals, mad with terror at the shouts of the Indians, broke from him, nearly pulling him out of his seat at the same time.

To cover the retreat of the others with their prey, a band of mounted Indians now appeared, threatening an attack in front, whilst their first assailants, rushing from the bottom, at least a hundred strong, assaulted in rear. "Do 'ee hyar, boys!" shouted old Bill, "break, or you'll go under. This child's goin' to câche!" and saying the word, off he went. *Sauve-qui-peut* was the order of the day, and not a moment too soon, for overwhelming numbers were charging upon them, and the mountain resounded with savage yells. La Bonté and Killbuck stuck together: they saw old Bill, bending over his saddle, dive right into the cloud of smoke, and apparently make for the creek bottom—their other companions scattering each on his own hook, and saw no more of them for many a month; and thus was one of the most daring and successful bands broken up that ever trapped in the mountains of the Far West.

It is painful to follow the steps of the poor fellows who, thus despoiled of the hardly-earned produce of their hunt, saw all their wealth torn from them at one swoop. The two Canadians were killed upon the night succeeding that of the attack. Worn with fatigue, hungry and cold, they had built a fire in what they thought was a secure retreat, and, rolled in their blankets, were soon buried in a sleep from which they never awoke. An Indian boy tracked them, and watched their camp. Burning with the idea of signalising himself thus early, he awaited his opportunity, and noiselessly approaching their resting-place, shot them both with arrows, and returned in triumph to his people with their horses and scalps.

La Bonté and Killbuck sought a passage in the mountain by which to cross over to the head waters of the Columbia, and there fall in with some of the traders or trappers of the North-west. They became involved in the mountains, in a part where was no game of any description, and no pasture for their miserable animals. One of these they killed for food; the other, a bag of bones, died from sheer starvation. They had very little ammunition, their moccasins were worn out, and they were unable to procure skins to supply themselves with fresh ones. Winter was fast approaching; the snow already covered the mountains; and storms of sleet and hail poured incessantly through the valleys, benumbing their exhausted limbs, hardly protected by scanty and ragged covering. To add to their miseries, poor Killbuck was taken ill. He had been wounded in the groin by a bullet some time before, and the ball still remained. The wound, aggravated by walking and the excessive cold, assumed an ugly appearance, and soon rendered him incapable of sustained exertion, all motion even being attended with intolerable pain. La Bonté had made a shanty for his suffering companion, and spread a soft bed of pine branches for him, by the side of a small creek at the point where it came out of the mountain and followed its course through a little prairie. They had been three days without other food than a piece of parflêche, which had formed the back of La Bonté's bullet-pouch, and which, after soaking in the creek, they eagerly devoured. Killbuck was unable to move, and sinking fast from exhaustion. His companion had hunted from morning till night, as well as his failing strength would allow him, but had not seen the traces of any kind of game, with the exception of some old buffalo tracks, made apparently months before by a band of bulls crossing the mountain.

The morning of the fourth day La Bonté, as usual, rose at daybreak from his blanket, and was proceeding to collect wood for the fire during his absence while hunting, when Killbuck called to him, and in an almost inarticulate voice desired him to seat himself by his side.

"Boy," he said, "this old hos feels like goin' under, and that afore long. You're stout yet, and if thar was meat handy, you'd come round slick. Now, boy, I'll be under, as I said, afore many hours, and if you don't raise meat you'll be in the same fix. I never eat dead meat* myself, and wouldn't ask no one to do it neither; but meat fair killed is meat any way; so, boy, put your knife in this old niggur's lights, and help yourself. It's 'poor bull,' I know, but maybe it'll do to keep life in; and along the fleece thar's meat yet, and maybe my old hump ribs has picking on 'em."

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* Carrion.

"You're a good old hos," answered La Bonté, "but this child ain't turned niggur yet."

Killbuck then begged his companion to leave him to his fate, and strive himself to reach game; but this alternative La Bonté likewise generously refused, and faintly endeavouring to cheer the sick man, left him once again to look for game. He was so weak that he felt difficulty in supporting himself, and knowing how futile would be his attempts to hunt, he sallied from the camp convinced that a few hours more would see the last of him.

He had scarcely raised his eyes, when, hardly crediting his senses, he saw within a few hundred yards of him an old bull, worn with age, lying on the prairie. Two wolves were seated on their haunches before him, their tongues lolling from their mouths, whilst the buffalo was impotently rolling his ponderous head from side to side, his blood-shot eyes glaring fiercely at his tormentors, and flakes of foam, mixed with blood, dropping from his mouth over his long shaggy beard. La Bonté was transfixed; he scarcely dared to breathe, lest the animal should be alarmed and escape. Weak as it was, he could hardly have followed it, and, knowing that his own and companion's life hung upon the success of his shot, he scarcely had strength to raise his rifle. By dint of extraordinary exertions and precautions, which were totally unnecessary, for the poor old bull had not a move in him, the hunter approached within shot. Lying upon the ground, he took a long steady aim, and fired. The buffalo raised its matted head, tossed it wildly for an instant, and, stretching out its limbs convulsively, turned over on its side and was dead.

Killbuck heard the shot, and crawling from under the little shanty which covered his bed, saw, to his astonishment, La Bonté in the act of butchering a buffalo within two hundred yards of camp. "Hurraw for you!" he faintly exclaimed; ~~and exhausted~~ by the exertion he had used, and perhaps by the excitement of an anticipated feast, fell back and fainted.

However, the killing was the easiest matter, for when the huge carcass lay dead upon the ground, our hunter had hardly strength to drive the blade of his knife through the tough hide of the old patriarch. Then having cut off as much of the meat as he could carry, eating the while sundry portions of the liver, which he dipped in the gall-bladder by way of relish, La Bonté cast a wistful look upon the half-starved wolves, who now loped round and round, licking their chops, only waiting until his back was turned to fall to with appetite equal to his own, and capabilities of swallowing and digesting far superior. La Bonté looked at the buffalo and then at the wolves, levelled his rifle and shot one dead, at which the survivor scampered off without delay.

Arrived at camp, packing in a tolerable load of

the best part of the animal—for hunger lent him strength—he found poor Killbuck lying on his back, deaf to time, and to all appearance gone under. Having no salvolatile or vinaigrette at hand, La Bonté flapped a lump of raw fleece into his patient's face, and this instantly revived him. Then taking the sick man's shoulder, he raised him tenderly into a sitting posture, and invited, in kindly accents, "the old hos to feed," thrusting at the same time a tolerable slice of liver into his hand, which the patient looked at wistfully and vaguely for a few short moments, and then greedily devoured. It was nightfall by the time that La Bonté, assisted by many intervals of hard eating, packed in the last of the meat, which formed a goodly pile around the fire.

"Poor bull" it was in all conscience: the labour of chewing a mouthful of the "tender loin" was equal to a hard day's hunt; but to them, poor starved fellows, it appeared the richest of meat. They still preserved a small tin pot, and in this, by stress of eternal boiling, La Bonté contrived to make some strong soup, which soon restored his sick companion to marching order. For himself, as soon as a good meal had filled him, he was strong as ever, and employed himself in drying the remainder of the meat for future use. Even the wolf, bony as he was, was converted into meat, and rationed them several days. Winter, however, had set in with such severity, and Killbuck was still so weak, that

La Bonté determined to remain in his present position until spring, as he now found that buffalo frequently visited the valley, as it was more bare of snow than the lowlands, and afforded them better pasture; and one morning he had the satisfaction of seeing a band of seventeen bulls within long rifle-shot of the camp, out of which four of the fattest were soon laid low by his rifle.

They still had hard times before them, for towards spring the buffalo again disappeared; the greater part of their meat had been spoiled, owing to there not being sufficient sun to dry it thoroughly; and when they resumed their journey they had nothing to carry with them, and had a desert before them without game of any kind. We pass over what they suffered. Hunger and thirst were their portion, and Indians assaulted them at times, and many miraculous and hair-breadth escapes they had from these enemies.

CHAPTER VI.

The trail to Oregon, followed by traders and emigrants, crosses the Rocky Mountains at a point known as the South Pass, where a break in the chain occurs of such moderate and gradual elevation, as to permit the passage of waggons with tolerable facility. The Sweet Water Valley runs nearly to the point where the dividing ridge of the Pacific and Atlantic waters throws off its streams to their respective oceans. At one end of this valley, and situated on the right bank of the Sweet Water, a huge isolated mass of granitic rock rises to the height of three hundred feet, abruptly from the plain. On the smooth and scarped surface presented by one of its sides, are rudely carved the names and initials of traders, trappers, travellers, and emigrants, who have here recorded the memorial of their sojourn in the remote wilderness of the Far West. The face of the rock is covered with names familiar to the mountaineers as those of the most renowned of their hardy brotherhood; while others again occur, better known to the science and literature of the Old World than to the unlearned trappers of the Rocky Mountains. The huge mass is a well-known landmark to the Indians and mountaineers; and travellers and emigrants hail it as the half-way beacon between the frontiers of the United States and the still distant goal of their long and perilous journey.

It was a hot sultry day in July. Not a breath of air relieved the intense and oppressive heat of the atmosphere, unusual here, where pleasant summer breezes, and sometimes stronger gales, blow over the elevated plains with the regularity of trade-winds. The sun, at its meridian height, struck the dry sandy plain and parched the drooping buffalo-grass on its surface, and its rays, refracted and reverberating from the heated ground, distorted every object seen through its lurid medium. Straggling antelope, leisurely crossing the adjoining prairie, appeared to be gracefully moving in mid-air; whilst a scattered band of buffalo bulls loomed huge and indistinct in the vapoury distance. In the timbered valley of the river, deer and elk were standing motionless in the water, under the shade of the overhanging cottonwoods, seeking a respite from the persevering attacks of swarms of horse-flies and musquitos; and now and then a heavy splash was heard, as they tossed their antlered heads into the stream, to free them from the venomous insects that buzzed incessantly about them. In the sandy prairie, beetles of an enormous size were rolling in every direction huge balls of earth, pushing them with their hind legs with comical perseverance; cameleons darted about, assimilating the hue of their grotesque bodies with the colour of the sand: groups of prairie-dog houses were seen, each with its inmate barking lustily on the roof; whilst under cover of nearly every bush of sage or cactus a rattlesnake lay glittering in lazy coil. Tantalising the parched sight, the neighbouring peaks of the lofty Wind River Mountains glittered in a mantle of sparkling snow, whilst Sweet Water Mountain, capped in cloud, looked gray and cool, in striking contrast to the burned up plains which lay basking at its foot.

Resting their backs against the rock (on which, we have said, are *now* carved the names of many travellers), and defended from the powerful rays of the sun by its precipitous sides, two white men quietly slept. They were gaunt and lantern-jawed, and clothed in tattered buckskin. Each held a rifle across his knees, but—strange sight in this country—one had its pan thrown open, which was rust-eaten and contained no priming; the other's hammer was without a flint. Their faces were as if covered with mahogany-coloured parchment; their eyes were sunken; and as their jaws fell listlessly on their breasts, their cheeks were hollow, with the bones nearly protruding from the skin. One was in the prime of manhood, with handsome features; the other, considerably past middle age, was stark and stern. Months of dire privation had brought them to this pass. The elder of the two was Killbuck, of mountain fame; the other was hight La Bonté.

The former opened his eyes, and saw the buffalo feeding on the plain. "Ho, boy," he said, touching his companion, "thar's meat a-runnin."

La Bonté looked in the direction the other pointed, stood up, and hitching round his pouch and powder-horn, drew the stopper from the latter with his teeth, and placing the mouth in the palm of his left hand, turned the horn up and shook it.

"Not a grain," he said—"not a grain, old hos."

"Wagh!" exclaimed the other, "we'll have to eat afore long," and rising, walked into the prairie. He had hardly stepped two paces, when, passing close to a sage bush, a rattlesnake whizzed a note of warning with its tail. Killbuck grinned, and taking the wiping-stick from his rifle-barrel, tapped the snake on the head, and, taking it by the tail, threw it to La Bonté, saying, "hyar's meat, any how." The old fellow followed up his success by slaying half-a-dozen more, and brought them in skewered through the head on his wiping-stick. A fire was soon kindled, and the snakes roasting before it; when La Bonté, who sat looking at the buffalo which fed close to the rock, suddenly saw them raise their heads, snuff the air, and scamper towards him. A few minutes afterwards a huge shapeless body loomed in the refracted air, approaching the spot where the buffalo had been grazing

The hunters looked at it and then at each other, and ejaculated "Wagh!" Presently a long white mass showed more distinctly, followed by another, and before each was a string of animals.

"Waggons, by hos and beaver! Hurrah for Conostoga!" exclaimed the trappers in a breath, as they now observed two white-tilted waggons, drawn by several pairs of mules, approaching the very spot where they sat. Several mounted men were riding about the waggons, and two on horseback, in advance of all, were approaching the rock, when they observed the smoke curling from the hunters' fire. They halted at sight of this, and one of the two, drawing a long instrument from a case, which Killbuck voted a rifle, directed it towards them for a moment, and then, lowering it, again moved forward.

As they drew near, the two poor trappers, although half-dead with joy, still retained their seats with Indian gravity and immobility of feature, turning now and then the crackling snakes which lay on the embers of the fire. The two strangers approached. One, a man of some fifty years of age, of middle height and stoutly built, was clad in a white shooting-jacket, of cut unknown in mountain tailoring, and a pair of trousers of the well-known material called "shepherd's plaid;" a broad-brimmed Panama shaded his face, which was ruddy with health and exercise; a belt round the waist supported a handsome bowie-knife, and a double-barrelled fowling-piece was *slung* across his shoulder.

His companion was likewise dressed in a light shooting-jacket, of many pockets and dandy cut, rode on an English saddle and in *boots*, and was armed with a superb double rifle, glossy from the case, and bearing few marks of use or service. He was a tall, fine-looking fellow of thirty, with light hair and complexion; a scrupulous beard and mustache; a wide-awake hat, with a short pipe stuck in the band, not very black with smoke; an elaborate powder-horn over his shoulder, with a Cairngorm in the butt as large as a plate; a blue handkerchief tied round his throat in a sailor's knot, and the collar of his shirt turned carefully over it. He had, moreover, a tolerable idea of his very correct appearance, and wore Woodstock gloves.

The trappers looked at them from head to foot, and the more they looked, the less could they make them out.

"H—!" exclaimed La Bonté emphatically.

"This beats grainin' bull-hide slick," broke from Killbuck as the strangers reined up at the fire, the younger dismounting, and staring with wonder at the weather-beaten trappers.

"Well, my men, how are you?" he rattled out. "Any game here? By Jove!" he suddenly exclaimed, seizing his rifle, as at that moment a large buzzard, the most unclean of birds, flew into the topmost branch of a cottonwood, and sat, a tempt-

ing shot. "By Jove, there's a chance!" cried the mighty hunter; and, bending low, started off to approach the unwary bird in the most approved fashion of northern deer-stalkers. The buzzard sat quietly, and now and then stretched its neck to gaze upon the advancing sportsman, who on such occasions threw himself flat on the ground, and remained motionless, in dread of alarming the bird. It was worth while to look at the countenance of old Killbuck, as he watched the antics of the "bourgeois" hunter. He thought at first that the dandy rifleman had really discovered game in the bottom, and was nothing loth that there was a chance of his seeing meat; but when he understood the object of such manœuvres, and saw the quarry the hunter was so carefully approaching, his mouth grinned from ear to ear, and, turning to La Bonté, he said, "Wagh! *he's* some—*he* is!"

Nothing doubting, however, the stranger approached the tree on which the bird was sitting, and, getting well under it, raised his rifle and fired. Down tumbled the bird; and the successful hunter, with a loud shout, rushed frantically towards it, and bore it in triumph to the camp, earning the most sovereign contempt from the two trappers by the achievement.

The other stranger was a quieter character. He, too, smiled as he witnessed the exultation of his younger companion, (whose horse, by the way, was scampering about the plain), and spoke kindly to the mountaineers, whose appearance was clear evidence of the sufferings they had endured. The snakes by this time were cooked, and the trappers gave their new acquaintances the never-failing invitation to "sit and eat." When the latter, however, understood what the viands were, their looks expressed the horror and disgust they felt.

"Good God!" exclaimed the elder, "you surely cannot eat such disgusting food?"

"This niggur doesn't savy what disgustin is," gruffly answered Killbuck; "but them as carries empty paunch three days an' more, is glad to get 'snake-meat,' I'm thinkin."

"What! you've no ammunition, then?"

"*Well*, we haven't."

"Wait till the waggons come up, and throw away that abominable stuff, and you shall have something better, I promise," said the elder of the strangers.

"Yes," continued the younger, "some hot preserved soup, hotch-potch, and a glass of porter, will do you good."

The trappers looked at the speaker, who was talking Greek (to them). They thought the bourgeois were making fun, and did not half like it, so answered simply, "Wagh! h—'s full of hosh-posh and porter."

Two large waggons presently came up, escorted by some eight or ten stout Missourians. Sublette was amongst the number, well known as a mountain trader, and under whose guidance the présent party, which formed a pleasure expedition at the expense of a Scotch sportsman, was leisurely making its way across the mountains to the Columbia. As several mountaineers were in company, Killbuck and La Bonté recognised more than one friend, and the former and Sublette were old compañeros. As soon as the animals were unhitched, and camp formed on the banks of the creek, a black cook set about preparing a meal. Our two trapping friends looked on with astonishment as the sable functionary drew from the waggon the different articles he required to furnish forth a feed. Hams, tongues, tins of preserved meats, bottles of pickles, of porter, brandy, coffee, sugar, flour, were tumbled promiscuously on the prairie; whilst pots and pans, knives, forks, spoons, plates, &c. &c., displayed their unfamiliar faces to the mountaineers. "Hosh-posh and porter" did not now appear such Utopian articles as they had first imagined; but no one but those who have fared for years on simple meat and water, can understand the relish with which they accepted the invitation of the Capen (as they called the Scotchman) to "take a horn of liquor." Killbuck and La Bonté sat in the same position as when we first surprised them asleep under the shadow of Independence Rock, regarding the profuse display of comestibles with scarce-believing eyes, and childishly helpless from the novelty of the scene. Each took the proffered half-pint cup, filled to the brim with excellent brandy—(no tee-totallers they!)—looked once at the amber-coloured surface, and with the usual mountain pledge of "here's luck!" tossed off the grateful liquour at a breath. This prepared them in some measure for what was yet in store for them. The Scotchman bestirred the cook in his work, and soon sundry steaming pots were lifted from the fire, and the skillets emptied of their bread—the contents of the former poured in large flat pans, while panikins were filled with smoking coffee. The two trappers needed no second invitation, but, seizing each a panful of steaming stew, drew the butcher-knives from their belts, and fell to lustily—the hospitable Scotchman plying them with more and more, and administering corrective noggins of brandy the while; until at last they were fain to cry enough, wiped their knives on the grass, and placed them in their sheaths—a sign that human nature could no more. How can pen describe the luxury of the smoke that followed, to lips which had not kissed pipe for many months, and how the fragrant honey-dew from Old Virginia was relishingly puffed.

But the Scotchman's bounty did not stop here. He soon elicited from the lips of the hunters the narrative of their losses and privations, and learned that they now, without ammunition and scarcely clothed, were on their way to Platte Fort, to hire themselves to the Indian traders in order to earn another outfit, wherewith once more to betake themselves to their perilous employment of trapping. What was their astonishment to see their entertainer presently lay out upon the ground two piles of goods, each consisting of a four-point Mackinaw, two tin canisters of powder, with corresponding lead and flints, a pair of moccasins, a shirt, and sufficient buckskin to make a pair of pantaloons; and how much the more was the wonder increased when two excellent Indian horses were presently lassoed from the cavallada, and with mountain saddle, bridle, and lariats complete, together with the two piles of goods described, presented to them "on the prairie" or "gift-free," by the kind-hearted stranger, who would not even listen to thanks for the most timely and invaluable present.

Once more equipped, our two hunters, filled with good brandy and fat buffalo meat, again wended on their way; their late entertainers continuing their pleasure trip across the gap of the South Pass, intending to visit the Great Salt Lake, or Timponogos, of the West. The former were bound for the North Fork of the Platte, with the intention of joining one of the numerous trapping parties which rendezvous at the American Fur Company's post on that branch of the river. On a fork of Sweet Water, however, not two days after the meeting with the Scotchman's waggons, they encountered a band of a dozen mountaineers, mounted on fine horses, and well armed and equipped, travelling along without the usual accompaniment of a mulada of pack-animals, two or three mules alone being packed with meat and spare ammunition. The band was proceeding at a smart rate, the horses moving with the gait peculiar to American animals, known as "*pacing*" or "*racking*," in Indian file—each of the mountaineers with a long heavy rifle resting across the horn of his saddle. Amongst them our two friends recognised Markhead, who had been of the party dispersed months before by the Blackfeet on one of the head streams of the Yellow Stone, which event had been the origin of the dire sufferings of Killbuck and La Bonté. Markhead, after running the gauntlet of numerous Indians, through the midst of whose country he passed with his usual temerity and utter disregard to danger, suffering hunger, thirst, and cold—those every-day experiences of mountain life—riddled with balls, but with three scalps hanging from his belt, made his way to a rendézvous on Bear River, whence he struck out for the Platte in early spring, in time to join the band he now accompanied, who were on a horse-stealing expedition to the Missions of Upper California. Little persuasion did either Killbuck or La Bonté require to join the sturdy freebooters. In five minutes they had gone "files-about," and at sundown were camping on the well-timbered bottom of "Little Sandy," feasting once more on delicate hump-rib and tender loin.

For California, ho!

Fourteen good rifles in the hands of fourteen mountain men, stout and true, on fourteen strong horses, of true Indian blood and training—fourteen cool heads, with fourteen pairs of keen eyes in them, each head crafty as an Indian's, directing a right arm strong as steel, and a heart as brave as grizzly bear's. Before them a thousand miles of dreary desert or wilderness, overrun by hostile savages, thirsting for the white man's blood; famine and drought, the arrows of wily hordes of Indians—and, these dangers past, the invasion of the civilised settlements of whites, the least numerous of which contained ten times their number of armed and bitter enemies,—the sudden swoop upon their countless herds of mules and horses, the fierce attack and bloody slaughter;—such were the consequences of the expedition these bold mountaineers were now engaged in. Fourteen lives of any fourteen enemies who would be rash enough to stay them, were, any day you will, carried in the rifle barrels of these stout fellows; who, in all the proud consciousness of their physical qualities, neither thought, nor cared to think, of future perils; and rode merrily on their way, rejoicing in the dangers they must necessarily meet. Never a more daring band crossed the mountains; a more than ordinary want of caution characterised their march, and dangers were recklessly and needlessly invited, which even the older and more cold-blooded mountaineers seemed not to care to avoid. They had, each and all, many a debt to pay the marauding Indians. Grudges for many privations, for wounds and loss of comrades, rankled in their breasts; and not one but had suffered more or less in property and person at the hands of the savages, within a few short months. Threats of vengeance on every Redskin they met were loud and deep; and the wild war-songs round their nightly camp-fires, and grotesque scalp-dances, borrowed from the Indians, proved to the initiated that they were, one and all, "half-froze for hair." Soon after Killbuck and La Bonté joined them, they one day suddenly surprised a band of twenty Sioux, scattered on a small prairie and butchering some buffalo they had just killed. Before they could escape, the whites were upon them with loud shouts, and in three minutes the scalps of eleven were dangling from their saddle-horns.

Struggling up mountains, slipping down precipices, dashing over prairies which resounded with their Indian songs, charging the Indians wherever they met them, and without regard to their numbers; frightening with their lusty war-whoops the miserable Diggers, who were not unfrequently surprised while gathering roots in the mountain plains, and who, scrambling up the rocks and concealing themselves, like sage rabbits, in holes and corners, peered, chattering with fear, as the wild and noisy troop rode by:—scarce drawing rein, they passed rapidly the heads of Green and Grand Rivers, through a country abounding in game and in excellent pasture; encountering in the upland valleys, through which meandered the well-timbered creeks on which they made their daily camps, many a band of Yutas, through whom they dashed at random, caring not whether they were friends or foes. Passing many other heads of streams, they struck at last the edge of the desert, lying along the south-eastern base of the Great Salt Lake, and which extends in almost unbroken sterility to the foot of the range of the Sierra Nevada—a mountain chain, capped with perpetual snow, that bounds the northern extremity of a singular tract of country, walled by mountains and utterly desert, whose salt lagoons and lakes, although fed by many streams, find no outlet to the ocean, but are absorbed in the spongy soil or thirsty sand, which characterise the different portions of this deserted tract. In the "Grand Basin," it is reported, neither human nor animal life can be supported. No oases cheer the wanderer in the unbroken solitude of the vast wilderness. More than once the lone trapper has penetrated, with hardy enterprise, into the salt plains of the basin; but no signs of beaver or fur-bearing animal rewarded the attempt. The ground is scantily covered with coarse unwholesome grass that mules and horses refuse to eat; and the water of the springs, impregnated with the impurities of the soil through which it percolates, affords but nauseating draughts to the thirsty traveller.

In passing from the more fertile uplands to the lower plains, as they descended the streams, the timber on their banks became scarcer, and the groves more scattered. The rich buffalo or *grama* grass was exchanged for a coarser species, on which the hard-worked animals soon grew poor and weak. The thickets of plum and cherry, of boxalder and quaking ash, which had hitherto fringed the creeks, and where the deer and bear loved to resort—the former to browse on the leaves and tender shoots, the latter to devour the fruit—now entirely disappeared, and the only shrub seen was the eternal sage-bush, which flourishes every where in the western regions in uncongenial soils where other vegetation refuses to grow. The visible change in the scenery had also a sensible effect on the spirits of the mountaineers. They travelled on in silence through the deserted plains; the hi-hi-hiya of their Indian chants was no longer heard enlivening the line of march. More than once a Digger of the Piyutah tribe took himself and hair, in safety, from their path, and almost unnoticed; but as they advanced they became more cautious in their movements, and testified, by the vigilant watch they kept, that they anticipated hostile attacks even in these arid wastes. They had passed without molestation through the country infested by the bolder Indians. The mountain Yutas, not relishing the appearance of the hunters, had left them unmolested; but they were now entering a country inhabited by the most degraded and abject of the western tribes; who, nevertheless, ever suffering from the extremities of hunger, have their brutish wits sharpened by the necessity of procuring food, and rarely fail to levy a contribution of rations, of horse or mule flesh, on the passenger in their inhospitable country. The brutish cunning and animal instinct of these wretches is such, that although arrant cowards, their attacks are more feared than those of bolder Indians. These people—called the Yamparicas or Root-Diggers—are, nevertheless, the degenerate descendants of those tribes which once overran that portion of the continent of North America now comprehended within the boundaries of Mexico, and who have left such startling evidences in their track of a comparatively superior state of civilisation. They now form an outcast tribe of the great nation of the Apache, which extends under various names from the Great Salt Lake along the table-lands on each side the Sierra Madre to the tropic of Cancer, where they merge into what are called the Mexican Indians. The whole of this nation is characterised by most abject cowardice; and they even refuse to meet the helpless Mexicans in open fight—unlike the Yuta or Camanche, who carry bold and open warfare into the territories of their civilised enemy, and never shrink from hand to hand encounter. The Apaches and the degenerate Diggers pursue a cowardly warfare, hiding in ambush, and shooting the passer-by with arrows; or, dashing upon him at night when steeped in sleep, they bury their arrow to the feather in his heaving breast. As the Mexicans say, "*Sin ventaja, no salen;*" they never attack without odds. But they are not the less dangerous enemies on this account; and by the small bands of trappers who visit their country, they are the more dreaded by reason of this cowardly and wolfish system of warfare.

To provide against surprise, therefore, as the hunters rode along, flankers were extended *en guerilla* on each side, mounting the high points to reconnoitre the country, and keeping a sharp look-out for Indian sign. At night the animals were securely hobbled, and a horse-guard posted round them—a service of great danger, as the stealthy cat-like Diggers are often known to steal up silently, under cover of the darkness, towards the sentinel, shoot him with their arrows, and approaching the animals, cut the hobbles and drive them away unseen.

One night they encamped on a creek where was but little of the coarsest pasture, and that little scattered here and there; so that they were compelled to allow their animals to roam farther than usual from camp in search of food. Four of the hunters, however, accompanied them to guard against surprise; whilst but half of those in camp lay down to sleep, the others, with rifles in their hands, remaining prepared for any emergency. This day they had killed one of their two pack-mules for food, game not having been met with for several days; but the animal was so poor, that it scarcely afforded more than one tolerable meal to the whole party.

A short time before the dawn of day an alarm was given; the animals were heard to snort violently; a loud shout was heard, followed by the sharp crack of a rifle, and the tramp of galloping horses plainly showed that a stampede had been effected. The whites instantly sprang to their arms, and rushed in the direction of the sounds. The body of the cavallada, however, had luckily turned, and, being headed by the mountaineers, were surrounded and secured, with the loss of only three, which had probably been mounted by the Indians.

Day breaking soon after, one of their band was discovered to be missing; and it was then found that a man who had been standing horse-guard at the time of the attack, had not come into camp with his companions. At that moment a thin spiral column of smoke was seen to rise from the banks of the creek, telling but too surely the fate of the missing mountaineer. It was the signal of the Indians to their people that a "*coup*" had been struck, and that an enemy's scalp remained in their triumphant hands,

"H—l—!" exclaimed the trappers in a breath; and soon imprecations and threats of revenge, loud and deep, were showered upon the heads of the treacherous Indians. Some of the party rushed to the spot where the guard had stood, and there lay the body of their comrade, pierced with lance and arrow, the scalp gone, and the body otherwise mutilated in a barbarous manner. Five were quickly in the saddle, mounted upon the strongest horses, and flying along the track of the Indians, who had made off towards the mountains with their prize and booty. We will not follow them in their work of bloody vengeance, save by saying that they followed the savages to their village, into which they charged headlong, recovered their stolen horses, and returned to camp at sundown with thirteen scalps dangling from their rifles, in payment for the loss of their unfortunate companion.*

In their further advance, hunger and thirst were their daily companions; they were compelled to kill several of their animals for food, but were fortunate enough to replace them by a stroke of good luck in meeting a party of Indians returning from an excursion against one of the Californian settlements with a tolerably large band of horses. Our hunters met this band one fine morning, and dashed into the midst at once; half a dozen Indians bit the dust, and twenty horses were turned over from red to white masters in as many seconds, which remounted those whose animals had been eaten, and enabled the others to exchange their worn-out steeds for fresh ones. This fortunate event was considered a *coup*, and the event was celebrated by the slaughter of a fat young horse, which furnished an excellent supper that night—a memorable event in these starveling regions.

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* In Frémont's expedition to California, on a somewhat similar occasion, two mountaineers, one the celebrated Kit Carson, the other a St Louis Frenchman named Godey, and both old trappers, performed a feat surpassing the one described above, inasmuch as they were but two. They charged into an Indian village to rescue some stolen horses, and avenge the slaughter of two New Mexicans who had been butchered by the Indians; both which objects they effected, returning to camp with the lost animals and a couple of propitiatory scalps.

They were now devouring their horses and mules at the rate of one every alternate day; for, so poor were the animals, that one scarcely furnished an ample meal for the thirteen hungry hunters. They were once more reduced to the animals they rode on; and after a fast of twenty-four hours' duration, were debating on the propriety of drawing lots as to whose Rosinante should fill the kettle, when some Indians suddenly appeared making signs of peace upon the bluff, and indicating a disposition to enter the camp for the purpose of trading Being invited to approach, they offered to trade a few dressed elk-skins; but being asked for meat, they said that their village was a long way off, and they had nothing with them but a small portion of some game they had lately killed. When requested to produce this, they hesitated, but the trappers looking hungry and angry at the same moment, an old Indian drew from under his blanket several flaps of portable dried meat, which he declared was bear's. It was but a small ration amongst so many; but, being divided, was quickly laid upon the fire to broil. The meat was stringy, and of whitish colour, altogether unlike any flesh the trappers had before eaten. Killbuck was the first to discover this. He had been quietly masticating the last mouthful of his portion, the stringiness of which required more than usual dental exertion, when the novelty of the flavour struck him as something singular. Suddenly his jaws ceased their work, he thought a moment, took the morsel from his mouth, looked at it intently, and dashed it into the fire.

"Man-meat, by G—!" he cried out; and at the words every jaw stopped work: the trappers looked at the meat and each other.

"I'm dog-gone if it ain't!" cried old Walker, looking at his piece, "and white meat at that, wagh!" (and report said it was not the first time he had tasted such viands;) and the conviction seizing each mind, every mouthful was quickly spat into the fire, and the ire of the deceived whites was instantly turned upon the luckless providers of the feast. They saw the storm that was brewing, and without more ado turned tail from the camp, and scuttled up the bluffs, where, turning round, they fired a volley of arrows at the tricked mountaineers, and instantly disappeared.

However, the desert and its nomade pilferers were at length passed; the sandy plains became grass-covered prairies; the monstrous cottonwood on the creeks was replaced by oak and ash; the surface of the country grew more undulating, and less broken up into cañons and ravines; elk and deer leaped in the bottoms, and bands of antelope dotted the plains, with occasional troops of wild horses, too wary to allow the approach of man. On the banks of a picturesque stream called the San Joaquim, the party halted a few days to recruit themselves and animals, feasting the while on the fattest of venison and other game. They then struck to the south-east for two days, until they reached a branch of the "Las Animas," a clear stream running through a pretty valley, well timbered and abounding in game. Here, as they wound along the river-banks, a horseman suddenly appeared upon the bluff above them, galloping at a furious rate along the edge. His dress approached in some degree to civilised attire. A broad-brimmed sombrero surmounted his swarthy face; a coloured blanket, through a slit in which his head was thrust, floated in the air from his shoulders; leathern leggings encased his lower limbs; and huge spurs jingled on his heels. He rode in a high-peaked Mexican saddle, his feet thrust in ponderous stirrups, and in his hand swung a coil of ready lasso, his only offensive arm. One of the trappers knew a little Spanish, and instantly hailed him.

"*Compadre,*" he shouted, "*por onde va?*" The Californian reined in suddenly, throwing the horse he rode on its very haunches, and darting down the bluff, galloped unhesitatingly into the midst of the hunters.

"*Americanos!*" he exclaimed, glancing at them; and continued, smiling—"*Y caballos quieren, por eso vienen tan lejitos. Jesus, que mala gente!*"—"It's horses you want, and for this you come all this way. Ah, what rogues you are!"

He was an Indian, employed at the mission of San Fernando, distant three days' journey from their present position, and was now searching for a band of horses and mules which had strayed. San Fernando, it appeared, had once before been visited by a party of mountain free-booters, and the Indian therefore divined the object of the present one. He was, he told them, "*un Indio, pero mansito:*" an Indian, but a tame one;[*] "*de mas, Christiano:*" a Christian moreover (exhibiting a small cross which hung round his neck). There were many people about the mission, he said, who knew how to fight, and had plenty of arms; and there were enough to "eat up" the "*Americanos, sin frijoles,*" without beans, as he facetiously observed. For his part, however, he was very friendly to the *Americanos;* he had once met a man of that nation who was a good sort of fellow, and had made him a present of tobacco, of which he was particularly fond. Finding this hint did not take, he said that the horses and mules belonging to the mission were innumerable—"like that," he added, sweeping his hand to all points of the compass over the plain, to intimate that they would cover that extent; and he could point out a large herd grazing nearer at hand than the mission, and guarded but by three *vaqueros*. Regaled with venison, and with a smoke of his coveted tobacco, he rode off, and made his way to the mission without delay, conveying the startling intelligence that a thousand Americans were upon them.

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[*] The Mexicans call the Indians living near the missions and engaged in agriculture, *mansos*, or *mansitos*, tame.

The next morning the thirteen doughty mountaineers quietly resumed their journey, moving leisurely along towards the object of their expedition.

It will not be out of place here to digress a little, in order to describe the singular features of the establishments formed in those remote regions by the Catholic church, as nuclei round which to concentrate the wandering tribes that inhabit the country, with a view to give them the benefit of civilised example, and to wean them from their restless nomadic habits.

The establishment of missions in Upper California is coeval with the first settlement of Southern Mexico. No sooner had Spanish rule taken a firm foothold in the Aztec empire, than the avowed primary object of the military expedition began to be carried into effect. "To save the souls" of the savage and barbarous subjects of their most Catholic majesties was ever inculcated upon the governors of the conquered country as the grand object to be sought after, as soon as tranquillity was partially restored by the submission of the Mexicans; and the Cross, the sacred emblem of the Catholic faith, was to be upraised in the remotest corners of the country, and the natives instructed and compelled to worship it, in lieu of the grotesque images of their own idolatrous religion.

To carry into effect these orthodox instructions, troops of pious priests, of friars and monks of every order, and even of saintly nuns, followed in the wake of the victorious armies of Cortez; and, girding up their loins with zealous fervour and enthusiasm, and with an enterprise and hardihood worthy of buccaneers, they pushed their adventurous way far into the bowels of the land, preaching devoutly and with commendable perseverance to savages who did not understand a syllable of what they so eloquently discoursed; and returning, after the lapse of many months passed in this first attempt, with glowing accounts of the "*muy buen indole,*" the very ductile disposition of the savages, and of the thousands they had converted to "*la santa fè catolica.*"

Ferdinand and Isabel, of glorious memory, at once beat up for volunteers. Crowds of Franciscan monks, greasy Capuchinos, and nuns of orthodox odour, joined the band; and saints even of the feminine gender, long since canonised and up aloft amongst the goodly muster of saints and martyrs, put foot once more on *terra firma*, and, rosary in hand, crossed the seas to participate in the good work. As proof of this latter fact, one Venabides, a Franciscan, whose veracity is beyond impeachment, declared that, while preaching in the regions now known as New Mexico, one million Indians from the "rumbo" known as Cibolo, a mighty nation, approached his temporary pulpit on the Rio Grande, and requested in a body the favour of being baptised. Struck with the singularity of this request from Indians with whom he had as yet held no communication, and with conscientious scruple as to whether he would be justified in performing such ceremony without their having received previous instruction, he hesitated a few moments before making an answer. At this juncture the Indians espied a medallion which hung around his neck, bearing the effigy of a certain saint of extraordinary virtue. At sight of this they fell on their knees before it; and it was some time before they found words (in what language does not appear) to explain to the holy father that the original of that effigy, which hung pendant from his neck, had been long amongst them instructing them in the elements of the Christian religion, and had only lately disappeared; informing them that certain reverend men would shortly appear in the land, who would finish the good work she had devoutly commenced, and clench the business by baptising the one million miserable sinners who now knelt before El Padre Venabides.

"Valgame Dios!" reverently exclaimed that worthy man, "qui milagro es este;" [what a miracle is this I hear ;] and casting up his eyes, and speaking slowly, as if he weighed every word, and taxing his memory of the historical calendar of saints, continued,—

"*Se murió—aquella—santissima—muger—en el ano* 175*—es decir—ya hacen—mil—quatro—cientos—anos.*" [That most holy woman died in the year 175, that is to say, one thousand four hundred years ago.]

"Oh, what a strange thing is this!" the padre continues devoutly. "After so many ages spent in heaven in company of the angels, of most holy men, and of virgins the most pure ; and, perhaps, also in the company of my worthy and esteemed friend and patron, Don Vincente Carvajal y Calvo, who died a few years ago in San Lucar of Xeres (bequeathing me certain arrobas of dry wine, of a class I greatly esteem—for which act he deserved to be canonised, and, I have no doubt, is), the said Don Vincente Carvajal y Calvo being, moreover, a man of the purest and holiest thoughts (Dios mio! what a puchero that man always had on his table!) this holy woman comes here—to these wild and remote regions ; this holy woman (who died fifteen hundred years ago), abandoning the company of angels, of holy men, and sanctified women and virgins, and also of Don Vincente Carvajal y Calvo (that worthy man!)—comes here, I say, where there are neither pucheros, nor garbanzos, nor dry wine, nor sweet wine, neither of Xeres, nor of Val de Peñas, nor of

Peralta; where" (sobbed the padre, and bellowed the last word) " there is—nothing either to eat or to drink. Valgame Purissima Maria! And what is the name of this holy woman? the world will ask," continues Venabides. " Santa Clara of Carmona is her name, one well known in my native country, who leaves heaven and all its joys, wends her way to the distant wilds of New Spain, and spends years in inducting the savage people to the holy faith. Truly a pious work, and pleasing to God!" *

Thus spoke Venabides the Franciscan, and no doubt he believed what he said; and many others in Old Spain were fools enough to believe it too, for the shaven heads flocked over in greater numbers, and the cry was ever " still they come."

Along the whole extent of the table-lands, not an Indian tribe but was speedily visited by the preaching friars and monks; and, in less than a century after the conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards, these hardy and enthusiastic frayles had pushed their way into the inhospitable regions of New Mexico, nearly two thousand miles distant from the valley of Anahuac. How they succeeded in surmounting the natural obstacles presented by the wild and barren deserts they traversed; how they escaped the infinite peril they encountered at every step, at the hands of the savage inhabitants of the

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* From a manuscript obtained in Santa Fé of New Mexico, describing the labours of the missionaries Fray Augustin Ruiz, Venabides, and Marcos, in the year 1585.

country, with whose language they were totally unacquainted, is sufficient puzzle to those who, in the present day, have attempted a journey in the same regions.

However, it is imposssible not to admire the hardihood of these holy pioneers of civilisation, who, totally unfitted by their former mode of life for undergoing such hardships as they must have anticipated, threw themselves into the wilderness with fearless and stubborn zeal.

For the most part, however, they found the Indians exceedingly hospitable and well disposed; and it was not until some time after—when, receiving from the missionary monks glowing, and not always very truthful accounts of the riches of the country in which they had located themselves, the governors of Mexico despatched armed expeditions under adventurous desperadoes to take and retain possession of the said country, with orders to compel the submission of the native tribes, and enforce their obedience to the authority of the whites—that the simple and confiding Indians began to see the folly they had committed in permitting the residence amongst them of these superior beings, whom they had first looked upon as more than mortal, but who, when strong enough to do so, were not long in throwing off the mask, and proving to the simple savages that they were much "more human than divine."

Thus, in the province of New Mexico, Fray

Augustin Ruiz, with his co-preachers, Marcos and Venabides, were kindly received by the native inhabitants, and we have seen how one million (?) Indians came from the "rumbo" of the Cibolo, ready and willing to receive the baptismal sacrament. This Cibolo, or Sivulo, as it is written in some old MSS., is, by the way, mysteriously alluded to by the monkish historians who have written on this region, as being a kingdom inhabited by a very superior class of Indians to any met with between Anahuac and the Vale of Taos—in the enjoyment of a high state of civilisation, inhabiting a well-built city, the houses of which were three stories high, and having attained considerable perfection in the domestic arts. This, notwithstanding the authority of Don Francisco Vasquez Coronado, who visited Cibolo, and of Solis and Venegas, who have guaranteed the assertion, must be received *cum grano salis;* but, at all events, the civilisation of the mysterious Cibolo may be compared to that of the Aztec empire, under Montezuma, at the time of the Spanish Conquest, both being egregiously exaggerated by the historians of the day. Cibolo was situated on a river called Tegue. At this day, neither name is known to the inhabitants of New Mexico. If pate-shaven Venabides had held his tongue, New Mexico might now be in the peaceful possession of the Catholic Missions, and the property of the Church of Mexico pretty considerably enhanced by the valuable *placeres*, or gold washings, which abound in that province. Full, however, of the wonderful miracle of Santa Clara of Carmona, which had been brought to light through the agency of the medallion at the end of his rosario, Fray Venabides must needs return to Spain, and humbug poor old Fernando, and even the more sensible Isabel, with wonderful accounts of the riches of the country he had been instrumental in exploring, and of the excellent disposition of the natives to receive the word of God. Don Juan Oñate was, therefore, quickly despatched to take possession; and in his train followed twelve Castilian families of *sangre azul*, to colonise the newly-acquired territory. The names of these still remain, disgraced by the degenerate wretches who now bear them, but in whom scarce a drop of blood remains which ever filtered from the veins of the paladins of Old Castile.

Then commenced the troublous times. The missions were upheld by dint of steel alone; and frequently the Indians rose, and often massacred their white persecutors. The colonists were more than once driven bodily from New Mexico, and were only reinstated by the aid of large bodies of armed men.

In California, however, they managed these things better. The wily monks took care to keep all interlopers from the country, established themselves in snug quarters, instructed the Indians in agriculture, and soon gained such an ascendancy over them, that no difficulty was experienced in keeping them under proper and wholesome restraint. Strong and commodious missions were built and fortified, well stored with arms and ammunition, and containing sufficient defenders to defy attack. Luxuriant gardens and thriving vineyards soon surrounded these isolated stations: the plains waved with golden corn; whilst domestic cattle, thriving on the rich pasture, and roaming far and near, multiplied and increased a hundred-fold.

Nothing can be more beautiful than the appearance of one of these missions, to the traveller who has lately passed the arid and barren wilderness of the North-west. The *adobe* walls of the convent-looking building, surmounted by cross and belfry, are generally hidden in a mass of luxuriant vegetation. Fig-trees, bananas, cherry, and apple, leaf-spreading platanos, and groves of olives, form umbrageous vistas, under which the sleek monks delight to wander; gardens, cultivated by their own hands, testify to the horticultural skill of the worthy padres; whilst vineyards yield their grateful produce to gladden the hearts of the holy exiles in these western solitudes. Vast herds of cattle roam half-wild on the plains, and bands of mules and horses, whose fame has even reached the distant table-lands of the Rocky Mountains, and excited the covetousness of the hunters—and thousands of which, from the day they are foaled to that of their death, never feel a saddle on their backs—cover the country. Indians (Mansitos) idle round the skirts of these vast herds (whose very numbers keep them together), living, at their own choice, upon the flesh of mule, or ox, or horse.

CHAPTER VII.

The Mission of San Fernando is situated on a small river called Las Animas, a branch of the Los Martires. The convent is built at the neck of a large plain, at the point of influx of the stream from the broken spurs of the sierra. The savana is covered with luxuriant grass, kept down, however, by the countless herds of cattle which pasture on it. The banks of the creek are covered with a lofty growth of oak and poplar, which near the Mission have been considerably thinned for the purpose of affording fuel and building materials for the increasing settlement. The convent stands in the midst of a grove of fruit-trees, its rude tower and cross peeping above them, and contrasting picturesquely with the wildness of the surrounding scenery. Gardens and orchards lie immediately in front of the building, and a vineyard stretches away to the upland ridge of the valley. The huts of the Indians are scattered here and there, built of stone and adobe, sometimes thatched with flags and boughs, but comfortable enough. The convent itself is a substantial building, of the style of architecture characterising monastic edifices in most parts of the world. Loopholes peer from its plastered walls, and on a flat portion of the roof a comically mounted gingall or wall-piece, carrying a two-pound ball, threatens the assailant in time of war. At one end of the oblong building, a rough irregular arch of sun-burned bricks is surmounted by a rude cross, under which hangs a small but deep-toned bell—the wonder of the Indian peones, and highly venerated by the frayles themselves, who received it as a present from a certain venerable archbishop of Old Spain, and who, whilst guarding it with reverential awe, tell wondrous tales of its adventures on the road to its present abiding place.

Of late years the number of the canonical inmates of the convent has been much reduced—there being but four priests now to do the duties of the eleven who formerly inhabited it: Fray Augustin, a Capuchin of due capacity of paunch, being at the head of the holy quartette. Augustin is the conventual name of the reverend father, who fails not to impress upon such casual visitants to that *ultima Thule* as he deems likely to appreciate the information, that, but for his humility, he might add the sonorous appellations of Ignacio Sabanal-Morales-y Fuentes—his family being of the best blood of Old Castile, and known there since the days of Ruy Gomez—el Campéador—possessing, moreover, half the "vega" of the Ebro, &c., where, had fate been propitious, he would now have been the sleek superior of a rich capuchin convent, instead of vegetating, a leather-clad frayle, in the wilds of California Alta.

Nevertheless, his lot is no bad one. With plenty of the best and fattest meat to eat, whether of beef or venison, of bear or mountain mutton; with good wine and brandy of home make, and plenty of it; fruit of all climes in great abundance; wheaten or corn bread to suit his palate; a tractable flock of natives to guide, and assisted in the task by three brother shepherds; far from the strife of politics or party—secure from hostile attack (not quite, by-the-by), and eating, drinking, and sleeping away his time, one would think that Fray Augustin Ignacio Sabanal-Morales-y Fuentes had little to trouble him, and had no cause to regret even the vega of Castilian Ebro, held by his family since the days of el Campéador.

One evening Fray Augustin sat upon an adobe bench, under the fig-tree shadowing the porch of the Mission. He was dressed in a goat-skin jerkin, softly and beautifully dressed, and descending to his hips, under which his only covering—tell it not in Gath!—was a long linen shirt, reaching to his knees, and lately procured from Puebla de los Angeles, as a sacerdotal garment. Boots, stockings, or unmentionables, he had none. A cigarito, of tobacco rolled in corn shuck, was occasionally placed between his lips; whereupon huge clouds of smoke rushed in columns from his mouth and nostrils.

His face was of a golden yellow colour, relieved by arched and very black eyebrows; his shaven chin was of most respectable duplicity—his corporation of orthodox dimensions. Several Indians and half-bred Mexican women were pounding Indian corn on metates near at hand; whilst sundry beef-fed urchins of whitey-brown complexion sported before the door, exhibiting, as they passed Fray Augustin, a curious resemblance to the strongly marked features of that worthy padre. They were probably his nieces and nephews—a class of relations often possessed in numbers by priests and monks.

The three remaining brothers were absent from the Mission; Fray Bernardo, hunting elk in the sierra; Fray José, gallivanting at Puebla de los Angeles, ten days' journey distant; Fray Cristoval, lassoing colts upon the plain. Augustin, thus left to his own resources, had just eaten his vespertine frijolitos and chile colorado, and was enjoying a post-cœnal smoke of fragrant pouche under the shadow of his own fig-tree.

Whilst thus employed, an Indian dressed in Mexican attire approached him hat in hand, and, making a reverential bow, asked his directions concerning domestic business of the Mission.

"Hola! friend José," cried Fray Augustin in a thick guttural voice, "pensaba yo—I was thinking that it was very nearly this time three years ago when those 'malditos Americanos' came by here and ran off with so many of our cavallada."

"True, reverend father," answered the administrador, "just three years ago, all but fifteen days: I remember it well. *Malditos sean*—curse them!"

"How many did we kill, José?"

"Quizas mōōchos—a great many, I dare say. But they did not fight fairly—charged right upon us, and gave us no time to do any thing. They don't know how to fight, these Mericanos; come right at you, before you can swing a lasso, hallooing like Indios Bravos."

"But, José, how many did they leave dead on the field?"

"Not one."

"And we?"

"Valgame Dios! thirteen dead, and many more wounded."

"That's it! Now if these savages come again (and the Chemeguaba, who came in yesterday, says he saw a large trail), we must fight adentro—within—outside is no go; for as you very properly say, José, these Americans don't know how to fight, and kill us before—before we can kill them! Vaya!"

At this moment there issued from the door of the Mission Don Antonio Velez Trueba, a Gachupin—that is, a native of Old Spain—a wizened old hidalgo refugee, who had left the mother country on account of his political opinions, which were stanchly Carlist, and had found his way—how, he himself scarcely knew—from Mexico to San Francisco in Upper California, where, having a most perfect contempt for every thing Mexican, and hearing that in the Mission of San Fernando, far away, were a couple of Spanish padres of "sangre regular," he had started into the wilderness to ferret them out; and having escaped all dangers on the route (which, however, were hardly dangers to the Don, who could not realise the idea of scalp-taking savages), had arrived with a whole skin at the Mission. There he was received with open arms by his countryman Fray Augustin, who made him welcome to all the place afforded, and there he harmlessly smoked away his time; his heart far away on the banks of the Genil and in the grape-bearing vegas of his beloved Andalusia, his withered cuerpo in the sierras of Upper California. Don Antonio was the walking essence of a Spaniard of the *ancien régime*. His family dated from the Flood, and with the exception of sundry refreshing jets of Moorish blood, injected into the Truebas during the Moorish epoch, no strange shoot was ever engrafted on their genealogical tree. The marriages of the family were ever confined to the family itself—never looking to fresh blood in a station immediately below it, which was not hidalgueño; nor above, since any thing higher in rank than the Trueba y Trueba family, *no habia*, there was not.

Thus, in the male and female scions of the house, were plainly visible the ill effects of breeding "in and in." The male Truebas were sadly degenerate

Dons, in body as in mind—compared to their ancestors of Boabdil's day; and the sennoritas of the name were all eyes, and eyes alone, and hardly of such stamp as would have tempted that amorous monarch to bestow a kingdom for a kiss, as ancient ballads tell.

> "Dueña de la negra toca,
> Por un beso de tu boca,
> Diera un reyno, Boabdil;
> Y yo por ello, Cristiana,
> Te diera de buena gana
> Mil cielos, si fueran mil."

Come of such poor stock, and reared on tobacco smoke and "gazpacho," Don Antonio would not have shone, even amongst pigmy Mexicans, for physical beauty. Five feet high, a framework of bones covered with a skin of Andalusian tint, the Trueba stood erect and stiff in all the consciousness of his "sangre regular." His features were handsome, but entirely devoid of flesh, his upper lip was covered with a jet-black mustache mixed with gray, his chin was bearded "like the pard." Every one around him clad in deer and goat skin, our Don walked conspicuous in shining suit of black—much the worse for wear, it must be confessed—with beaver hat sadly battered, and round his body and over his shoulder an unexceptionable "capa" of the amplest dimensions. Asking, as he stepped over him, the pardon of an Indian urchin who blocked the door, and bowing with punctilious politeness to the sturdy mozas who were grinding corn, Don Antonio approached our friend Augustin, who was discussing warlike matters with his administrador.

"Hola! Don Antonio, how do you find yourself, sir?"

"Perfectly well, and your very humble servant, reverend father; and your worship also, I trust you are in good health?"

"*Sin novedad*—without novelty;" which, since it was one hour and a half since our friends had separated to take their siestas, was not impossible.

"Myself and the worthy José," continued Fray Augustin, "were speaking of the vile invasion of a band of North American robbers, who three years since fiercely assaulted this peaceful Mission, killing many of its inoffensive inhabitants, wounding many more, and carrying off several of our finest colts and most promising mules to their dens and caves in the Rocky Mountains. Not with impunity, however, did they effect this atrocity. José informs me that many of the assailants were killed by my brave Indians. How many said you, José?"

"Quizas mo-o-ochos," answered the Indian.

"Yes, probably a great multitude," continued the padre; "but, unwarned by such well-merited castigation, it has been reported to me by a Chemeguaba mansito, that a band of these audacious marauders are now on the road to repeat the offence, numbering many thousands, well mounted and armed; and to oppose these white barbarians it behoves us to make every preparation of defence."*

"There is no cause for alarm," answered the Andaluz. "I (tapping his breast) have served in three wars: in that glorious one 'de la Independencia,' when our glorious patriots drove the French like sheep across the Pyrenees; in that equally glorious one of 1821; and in the late magnanimous struggle for the legitimate rights of his majesty Charles V., king of Spain (doffing his hat), whom God preserve. With that right arm," cried the spirited Don, extending his shrivelled member, "I have supported the throne of my kings — have fought for my country, mowing down its enemies before me; and with it," vehemently exclaimed the Gachupin, working himself into a perfect frenzy, "I will slay these Norte Americanos, should they dare to show their faces in my front. Adios, Don Augustin Ignacio Sabanal-Morales-y Fuentes," he cried, doffing his hat with an earth-sweeping bow; "I go to grind my sword. Till then adieu."

"A countryman of mine!" said the frayle, admiringly, to the administrador. "With him by our side we need not to fear: neither Norte Americanos, nor the devil himself, can harm us when he is by."

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* From the report to the Governor of California by the Head of the Mission, in reference to the attacks by the American mountaineers.

Whilst the Trueba sharpens his Tizona, and the priest puffs volumes of smoke from his nose and mouth, let us introduce to the reader one of the muchachitas, who knelt grinding corn on the metate, to make tortillas for the evening meal. Juanita was a stout wench from Sonora, of Mexican blood, hardly as dark as the other women who surrounded her, and with a drop or two of the Old Spanish blood struggling with the darker Indian tint to colour her plump cheeks. An enagua (a short petticoat) of red serge was confined round her waist by a gay band ornamented with beads, and a chemisette covered the upper part of the body, permitting, however, a prodigal display of her charms. Whilst pounding sturdily at the corn, she laughed and joked with her fellow-labourers upon the anticipated American attack, which appeared to have but few terrors for her. "Que vengan," she exclaimed—"let them come; they are only men, and will not molest us women. Besides, I have seen these white men before—in my own country, and they are fine fellows, very tall, and as white as the snow on the sierras. Let them come, say I!"

"Only hear the girl!" cried another: "if these savages come, then will they kill Pedrillo, and what will Juanita say to lose her sweetheart?"

"Pedrillo!" sneered the latter; "what care I for Pedrillo? Soy Mejicana, yo—a Mexican girl am I, I'd have you know, and don't demean me to look at a wild Indian. Not I, indeed, by my salva-tion! What I say is, let the Norte Americanos come."

At this juncture Fray Augustin called for a glass of aguardiente, which Juanita was despatched to bring, and, on presenting it, the churchman facetiously inquired why she wished for the Americans, adding, "Don't think they'll come here—no, no: here we are brave men, and have Don Antonio with us, a noble fellow, well used to arms." As the words were on his lips, the clattering of a horse's hoofs was heard rattling across the loose stones and pebbles in the bed of the river, and presently an Indian herder galloped up to the door of the Mission, his horse covered with foam, and its sides bleeding from spur-wounds.

"Oh, padre mio!" he cried, as soon as he caught sight of his reverence, "vienen los Americanos—the Americans, the Americans are upon us. Ave Maria purissima!—more than ten thousand are at my heels!"

Up started the priest and shouted for the Don.

That hidalgo presently appeared, armed with the sword that had graced his thigh in so many glorious encounters—the sword with which he had mowed down the enemies of his country, and by whose aid he now proposed to annihilate the American savages, should they dare to appear bef[illegible]him.

The alarm was instantly given; peones, vagueros hurried from the plains; and milpas, warned by the deep-toned bell, which soon rung out its sonorous alarum. A score of mounted Indians, armed with gun and lasso, dashed off to bring intelligence of the enemy. The old gingall on the roof was crammed with powder and bullets to the very muzzle, by the frayle's own hand. Arms were brought and piled in the sala, ready for use. The padre exhorted, the women screamed, the men grew pale and nervous, and thronged within the walls. Don Antonio, the fiery Andaluz, alone remained outside, flourishing his whetted sabre, and roaring to the padre, who stood on the roof with lighted match, by the side of his formidable cannon, not to be affrighted. "That he, the Trueba, was there, with his Tizona, ready to defeat the devil himself should he come on."

He was deaf to the entreaties of the priest to enter.

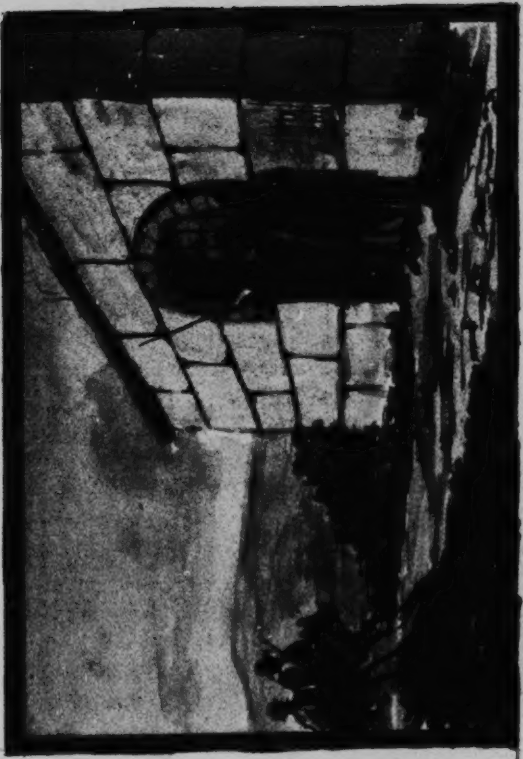
"Siempre en el frente—Ever in the van," he said, "was the war-cry of the Truebas."

But now a cloud of dust was seen approaching from the plain, and presently a score of horsemen dashed headlong towards the Mission. "El enemigo," shouted Fray Augustin; and, without waiting to aim, he clapped his match to the touch-hole of the gun, harmlessly pointed to the sky, and crying out "in el nombre de Dios"—in God's name—as he did so, was instantly knocked over and over by the recoil of the piece, then was as instantly seized by some of the Indian garrison, and forced through the trap-door into the building; whilst the horsemen (who were his own scouts) galloped up with the intelligence that the enemy was at hand, and in overwhelming force.

Thereupon the men were all mounted, and formed in a body before the building, to the amount of more than fifty, well armed with guns or bows and arrows. Here the gallant Don harangued them, and infusing into their hearts a little of his own courage, they eagerly demanded to be led against the enemy. Fray Augustin re-appeared on the roof, gave them his blessing, advised them to give no quarter, and, with slight misgivings, saw them ride off to the conflict.

About a mile from the Mission, the plain gradually ascended to a ridge of moderate elevation, on which was a growth of dwarf oak and ilex. To this point the eyes of the remaining inmates of the convent were earnestly directed, as here the enemy was first expected to make his appearance. Presently a few figures were seen to crown the ridge, clearly defined against the clear evening sky. Not more than a dozen mounted men composed this party, which all imagined must be doubtless the vanguard of the thousand invaders. On the summit of the ridge they halted a few minutes, as if to reconnoitre; and by this time the Californian horsemen were halted in the plain, midway between the Mission and the ridge, and distant from the former less than half-a-mile, so that all the operations were clearly visible to the lookers-on.

The enemy wound slowly, in Indian file, down the broken ground of the descent; but when the plain was reached, they formed into something like a line, and trotted fearlessly towards the Californians. These began to sit uneasily in their saddles; nevertheless they made a forward movement, and even broke into a gallop, but soon halted, and again huddled together. Then the mountaineers quickened their pace, and their loud shout was heard as they dashed into the middle of the faltering troop. The sharp cracks of the rifles followed, and the duller reports of the smooth-bored pieces of the Californians; a cloud of smoke and dust arose from the plain, and immediately half-a-dozen horses, with empty saddles, broke from it, followed quickly by the Californians, flying like mad across the level. The little steady line of the mountaineers advanced, and puffs of smoke arose, as they loaded and discharged their rifles at the flying horsemen. As the Americans came on, however, one was seen to totter in his saddle, the rifle fell from his grasp, and he tumbled headlong to the ground. For an instant his companions surrounded the fallen man, but again forming, dashed towards the Mission, shouting fierce war-whoops, and brandishing aloft their long and heavy rifles. Of the defeated Californians some jumped off their horses at the door of the Mission, and sought shelter within; others galloped off towards the sierra in panic-stricken plight. Before the gate, however, still paced valiantly the proud hidalgo, encumbered with his cloak, and waving



with difficulty his sword above his head. To the priest and women, who implored him to enter, he replied with cries of defiance, "Viva Carlos Quinto," and "Death or glory." He shouted in vain to the flying crowd to halt; but, seeing their panic was beyond hope, he clutched his weapon more firmly as the Americans dashed at him, closed his teeth and his eyes, thought once of the vega of his beloved Genil, and of Granada la Florida, and gave himself up for lost. Those inside the Mission, when they observed the flight of their cavalry, gave up the defence as hopeless; and already the charging mountaineers were almost under the walls, when they observed the curious figure of the little Don making demonstrations of hostility.

"Wagh!" exclaimed the leading hunter (no other than our friend La Bonté), "here's a little crittur as means to do all the fighting;" and seizing his rifle by the barrel, he poked at the Don with the butt-end, who parried the blow, and with such a sturdy stroke, as nearly severed the stock in two. Another mountaineer rode up, and, swinging his lasso overhead, threw the noose dexterously over the Spaniard's head, and as it fell over his shoulders, drew it taut, thus securing the arms of the pugnacious Don as in a vice.

"Quartel!" cried the latter; "por Dios, quartel!"

"Quarter be d——!" exclaimed one of the whites, who understood Spanish; "who's agoin' to hurt you, you little crittur?"

By this time Fray Augustin was waving a white flag from the roof, in token of surrender; and soon after he appeared trembling at the door, beseeching the victors to be merciful and to spare the lives of the vanquished, when all and every thing in the Mission would be freely placed at their disposal.

"What does the niggur say!" asked old Walker, the leader of the mountaineers, of the interpreter.

"Well, he talks so queer, this hos can't rightly make it out."

"Tell the old coon then to quit that, and make them darned greasers clear out of the lodge, and pock some corn and shucks here for the animals, for they're nigh give out."

This being conveyed to him in mountain Spanish, which fear alone made him understand, the padre gave orders to the men to leave the Mission, advising them, moreover, not to recommence hostilities, as himself was kept as hostage, and if a finger was lifted against the mountaineers, he would be killed at once, and the Mission burned to the ground. Once inside, the hunters had no fear of attack, they could have kept the building against all California; so, leaving a guard of two outside the gate, and first seeing their worn-out animals supplied with piles of corn and shucks, they made themselves at home, and soon were paying attention to the hot tortillas, meat, and chile colorado which were quickly placed before them, washing down the hot-spiced viands with deep draughts of wine and brandy. It would have been amusing to have seen the faces of these rough fellows as they gravely pledged each other in the grateful liquor, and looked askance at the piles of fruit served by the attendant Hebes. These came in for no little share of attention, it may be imagined; but the utmost respect was paid to them, for your mountaineer, rough and bear-like though he be, never, by word or deed, offends the modesty of a woman, although sometimes obliged to use a compulsory wooing, when time is not allowed for regular courtship, and not unfrequently known to jerk a New Mexican or Californian beauty behind his saddle, should the obdurate parents refuse consent to their immediate union. It tickled the Americans not a little to have all their wants supplied, and to be thus waited upon, by what they considered the houris of paradise; and after their long journey, and the many hardships and privations they had suffered, their present luxurious situation seemed scarcely real.

The hidalgo, released from the durance vile of the lasso, assisted at the entertainment; his sense of what was due to the "sangre regular" which ran in his veins being appeased by the fact, that he sat *above* the wild uncouth mountaineers, these preferring to squat crosslegged on the floor in their own fashion, to the uncomfortable and novel luxury of a chair. Killbuck, indeed, seemed to have quite forgotten the use of such pieces of furniture. On Fray Augustin offering him one, and begging him, with many protestations, to be seated, that old mountain worthy looked at it, and then at the padre, turned it round, and at length comprehending the intention, essayed to sit. This he effected at last, and sat grimly for some moments, when, seizing the chair by the back, he hurled it out of the open door, exclaiming,—"Wagh! this coon aint hamshot anyhow, and don't want such fixins, he don't;" and gathering his legs under his body, reclined in the manner customary to him. There was a prodigious quantity of liquor consumed that night, the hunters making up for their many banyans; but as it was the pure juice of the grape, it had little or no effect upon their hard heads. They had not much to fear from attacks on the part of the Californians; but, to provide against all emergencies, the padre and the Gachupin were "hobbled," and confined in an inner room, to which there was no ingress nor egress save through the door which opened into the apartment where the mountaineers lay sleeping, two of the number keeping watch. A fandango with the Indian girls had been proposed by some of them, but Walker placed a decided veto on this. He said "they had need of sleep now, for there was no knowing what to-morrow might bring forth; that they had a long journey before them, and winter was coming on; they would have to 'streak' it night and day, and sleep when their journey was over, which would not be until Pike's Peak was left behind them. It was now

October, and the way they'd have to hump it back to the mountains would take the gristle off a paintor's tail."

Young Ned Wooton was not to the fore when the roll was called. He was courting the Sonora wench Juanita, and to some purpose, for we may at once observe, that the maiden accompanied the mountaineer to his distant home, and at the present moment is sharing his lodge on Hard-scrabble creek of the upper Arkansa, having been duly and legally married by Fray Augustin before their departure.

But now the snow on the ridge of the Sierra Madre, and the nightly frosts; the angular flights of geese and ducks constantly passing overhead; the sober tints of the foliage, and the dead leaves that strew the ground; the withering grass on the plain, and the cold gusts, sometimes laden with snow and sleet, that sweep from the distant snow-clad mountains;—all these signs warn us to linger no longer in the tempting valley of San Fernando, but at once to pack our mules to cross the dreary and desert plains and inhospitable sierras; and to seek with our booty one of the sheltered bayous of the Rocky Mountains.

On the third day after their arrival, behold our mountaineers again upon the march, driving before them—with the assistance of half-a-dozen Indians, impressed for the first few days of the journey until the cavallada get accustomed to travel without confusion—a band of four hundred head of mules and horses, themselves mounted on the strongest and fleetest they could select from at least a thousand.

Fray Augustin and the Hidalgo, from the housetop, watched them depart: the former glad to get rid of such unscrupulous guests at any cost, the latter rather loath to part with his boon companions, with whom he had quaffed many a quartillo of Californian wine. Great was the grief, and violent the sobbing, when all the girls in the Mission surrounded Juanita to bid her adieu; as she, seated *en cavalier* on an easy pacing mule, bequeathed her late companions to the keeping of every saint in the calendar, and particularly to the great St Ferdinand himself, under whose especial tutelage all those in the Mission were supposed to live. Pedrillo, poor forsaken Pedrillo, a sullen sulky half-breed, was overcome, not with grief, but with anger at the slight put upon him, and vowed revenge. He of the "sangre regular," having not a particle of enmity in his heart, waved his arm—that arm with which he had mowed down the enemies of Carlos Quinto—and requested the mountaineers, if ever fate should carry them to Spain, not to fail to visit his quinta in the vega of Genil, which, with all in it, he placed at their worships' disposal—con muchissima franqueza.

Fat Fray Augustin likewise waved his arm, but groaned in spirit as he beheld the noble band of mules and horses, throwing back clouds of dust on the plain where they had been bred. One noble roan stallion seemed averse to leave his accustomed pasture, and again and again broke away from the band. Luckily old Walker had taken the precaution to secure the "*bell-mare*" of the herd, and mounted on her rode a-head, the animals all following their well-known leader. As the roan galloped back, the padre was in ecstasy. It was a favourite steed, and one he would have gladly ransomed at any price.

"Ya viene, ya viene!" he cried out, "now, now it's coming! hurra for the roan!" but, under the rifle of a mountaineer, one of the Californians dashed at it, a lasso whirling round his head, and turning and twisting like a doubling hare, as the horse tried to avoid him, at last threw the open coil over the animal's head, and led him back in triumph to the band.

"Maldito sea aquel Indio—curse that Indian!" quoth the padre, and turned away.

And now our sturdy band—less two who had gone under—were fairly on their way. They passed the body of their comrade who had been killed in the fight before the Mission; the wolves, or Indian dogs, had picked it to the bones; but a mound near by, surrounded by a rude cross, showed where the Californians (seven of whom were killed) had been interred—the pile of stones at the foot of the cross testifying that many an *ave maria* had already been said by the poor Indians, to save the souls of their slaughtered companions from the pangs of purgatory.

For the first few days progress was slow and tedious. The confusion attendant upon driving so large a number of animals over a country without trail or track of any description, was sufficient to prevent speedy travelling; and the mountaineers, desirous of improving the pace, resolved to pursue a course more easterly, and to endeavour to strike the great SPANISH TRAIL, which is the route followed by the New Mexicans in their journeys to and from the towns of Puebla de los Angeles and Santa Fé. This road, however, crosses a long stretch of desert country, destitute alike of grass and water, save at a few points, the regular halting-places of the caravans; and as but little pasture is to be found at these places at any time, there was great reason to doubt, if the Santa Fé traders had passed this season, that there would not be sufficient grass to support the numerous cavallada, after the herbage had been laid under contribution by the traders' animals. However, a great saving of time would be effected by taking this trail, although it wound a considerable distance out of the way to avoid the impassable chain of the Sierra Nevada—the gap in those mountains through which the Americans had come being far to the southward, and at this late season probably obstructed by the snow.

Urged by threats and bribes, one of the Indians agreed to guide the cavallada to the trail, which he declared was not more than five days' distant. As they advanced, the country became wilder and more sterile,—the valleys, through which several small streams coursed, alone being capable of supporting so large a number of animals. No time was lost in hunting for game; the poorest of the mules and horses were killed for provisions, and the diet was improved by a little venison when a deer casually presented itself near the camping ground. Of Indians they had seen not one; but they now approached the country of the Diggers, who infest the district through which the Spanish trail passes, laying contributions on the caravans of traders, and who have been, not inaptly, termed the "Arabs of the American desert." The Californian guide now earnestly entreated permission to retrace his steps, saying, that he should lose his life if he attempted to pass the Digger country alone on his return. He pointed to a snow-covered peak, at the foot of which the trail passed; and leave being accorded, he turned his horse's head towards the Mission of San Fernando.

Although the cavallada travelled, by this time, with much less confusion than at first, still, from the want of a track to follow, great trouble and exertion were required to keep the proper direction. The bell-mare led the van, carrying Walker, who was better acquainted with the country than the others; another hunter, of considerable distinction in the band, on a large mule, rode by his side. Then followed the cavallada, jumping and frisking with each other, stopping whenever a blade of grass showed, and constantly endeavouring to break away to green patches which sometimes presented themselves in the plains. Behind the troop, urging them on by dint of loud cries and objurgations, rode six mountaineers, keeping as much as possible in a line. Two others were on each flank to repress all attempts to wander, and keep the herd in a compact body. In this order the caravan had been crossing a broken country, up and down ridges, all day, the animals giving infinite trouble to their drivers, when a loud shout from the advanced guard put them all upon the *qui-vive*. Old Walker was seen to brandish the rifle over his head and point before him, and presently the cry of "The trail! the trail!" gladdened all hearts with the anticipation of a respite from the harassing labour of mule-driving. Descending a broken ridge, they at once struck into a distinct and tolerably well-worn track, into which the cavallada turned as easily and instinctively as if they had all their lives been accustomed to travel on beaten roads. Along this they travelled merrily—their delight being, however, alloyed by frequent indications that hunger and thirst had done their work on the mules and horses of the caravans which had preceded them on the trail. They happened to strike it in the centre of a long stretch of desert, extending sixty miles without either water or pasture; and many animals had perished here, leaving their bones to bleach upon the plain. The soil was sandy, but rocks and stones covered the surface, disabling the feet of many of the young horses and mules; several of which, at this early stage of the journey, were already abandoned. Traces of the wretched Diggers became very frequent; these abject creatures resorting to the sandy plains for the purpose of feeding upon the lizards which there abound. As yet they did not show; only at night they prowled around the camp, waiting a favourable opportunity to run the animals. In the present instance, however, many of the horses having been left on the road, the Diggers found so plentiful a supply of meat as to render unnecessary any attack upon the formidable mountaineers.

One evening the Americans had encamped, earlier than usual, on a creek well-timbered with willow and quaking-ash, and affording tolerable pasture; and although it was still rather early, they determined to stop here, and give the animals an opportunity to fill themselves. Several deer had jumped out of the bottom as they entered it; and La Bonté and Killbuck had sallied from the camp with their rifles, to hunt and endeavour to procure some venison for supper. Along the river banks, herds of deer were feeding in every direction, within shot of the belt of timber; and the two hunters had no difficulty in approaching and knocking over two fine bucks within a few paces of the thicket. They were engaged in butchering the animals, when La Bonté, looking up from his work, saw half-a-dozen Indians dodging among the trees, within a few yards of himself and Killbuck. At the same instant two arrows *thudded* into the carcass of the deer over which he knelt, passing but a few inches from his head. Hollowing to his companion, La Bonté immediately seized the deer, and, lifting it with main strength, held it as a shield before him, but not before an arrow had struck him in the shoulder. Rising from the ground he retreated behind cover, yelling loudly to alarm the camp, which was not five hundred yards' distant on the other side of the stream. Killbuck, when apprised of the danger, ran bodily into the plain, and, keeping out of shot of the timber, joined La Bonté, who now, out of arrow-shot, threw down his shield of venison and fired his rifle at the assailants. The Indians appeared at first afraid to leave the cover; but three or four more joining them, one a chief, they advanced into the plain, with drawn bows, scattering wide apart, and running swiftly towards the whites, in a zigzag course, in order not to present a steady mark to their unerring rifles. The latter were too cautious to discharge their pieces, but kept a steady front, with rifle at shoulder. The Indians evidently disliked to approach nearer; but the chief, an old grizzled man, incited them by word and gesture—running in

advance, and calling upon the others to follow him.

"Ho, boy!" exclaimed Killbuck to his companion, "that old coon must go under, or we'll get rubbed out by these darned critturs."

La Bonté understood him. Squatting on the ground, he planted his wiping-stick firmly at the extent of his left arm, and resting the long barrel of his rifle on his left hand, which was supported by the stick, he took a steady aim and fired. The Indian, throwing out his arms, staggered and let fall his bow—tried hard to recover himself, and then fell forward on his face. The others, seeing the death of their chief, turned and made again for the cover. "You darned critturs," roared Killbuck, "take that!" and fired his rifle at the last one, tumbling him over as dead as a stone. The camp had also been alarmed. Five of them waded across the creek and took the Indians in rear; their rifles cracked within the timber, several more Indians fell, and the rest quickly beat a retreat. The venison, however, was not forgotten; the two deer were packed into camp, and did the duty of mule-meat that night.

This lesson had a seasonable effect upon the Diggers, who made no attempt on the cavallada that night or the next; for the camp remained two days to recruit the animals.

We will not follow the party through all the difficulties and perils of the desert route, nor detail the various devilries of the Diggers, who constantly sought opportunities to stampede the animals, or, approaching them in the night as they grazed, fired their arrows indiscriminately at the herd, trusting that dead or disabled ones would be left behind, and afford them a good supply of meat. In the month of December the mountaineers crossed the great dividing ridge of the Rocky Mountains, making their way through the snowy barrier with the utmost difficulty, and losing many mules and horses in the attempt. On passing the ridge, they at once struck the head-springs of the Arkansa river, and turned into the Bayou Salade. Here they found a village of Arapahós, and were in no little fear of leaving their cavallada with these dexterous horse-thieves. Fortunately, the chief in command was friendly to the whites, and restrained his young men; and a present of three horses insured his good offices. Still, the near neighbourhood of these Indians being hardly desirable, after a few days' halt, the Americans were again on their way, and halted finally at the juncture of the Fontaine-qui-bout with the Arkansa, where they determined to construct a winter camp. They now considered themselves at home, and at once set about building a log-shanty capable of containing them all, and a large corral for securing the animals at night, or in case of Indian alarms. This they effected by felling several large cottonwoods, and throwing them in the form of a hore-shoe: the entrance, however, being narrower than in that figure, and secured by upright logs, between which poles were fixed to be withdrawn at pleasure. The house, or "fort"—as any thing in the shape of a house is called in these parts, where, indeed, every man must make his house a castle—was loopholed on all sides, and boasted a turf chimney of rather primitive construction; but which answered the purpose of drawing the smoke from the interior. Game was plentiful all around;—bands of buffalo were constantly passing the Arkansa; and there were always deer and antelope within sight of the fort. The pasture, too, was good and abundant—being the rich grama or buffalo grass, which, although rather dry at this season, still retains its fattening qualities; and the animals soon began to improve wonderfully in condition and strength.

Of the four hundred head of mules and horses with which they had started from California, but one-half reached the Arkansa. Many had been killed for food (indeed they had furnished the only provisions during the journey), many had been stolen by the Indians, or shot by them at night; and many had strayed off and not been recovered. We have omitted to mention that the Sonora girl, Juanita, and her spouse, Ned Wooton, remained behind at Roubideau's fort and rendezvous on the Uintah, which our band had passed on the other side of the mountains, whence they proceeded with a party to Taos in New Mexico, and resided there for some years, blessed with a fine family, &c. &c. &c., as the novels end.

As soon as the animals were fat and strong, they were taken down the Arkansa to Bent's Indian trading fort, about sixty miles below the mouth of Fontaine-qui-bout. Here a ready sale was found for them, mules being at that time in great demand on the frontier of the United States, and every season the Bents carried across the plains to Independence a considerable number collected in the Indian country, and in the upper settlements of New Mexico. While the mountaineers were descending the Arkansa, a little incident occurred, and some of the party very unexpectedly encountered an old friend. Killbuck and La Bonté, who were generally compañeros, were riding some distance ahead of the cavallada, passing at the time the mouth of the Huerfano or Orphan Creek, when, at a long distance before them, they saw the figure of a horseman, followed by two loose animals, descending the bluff into the timbered bottom of the river. Judging the stranger to be Indian, they spurred their horses and galloped in pursuit, but the figure ahead suddenly disappeared. However, they quickly followed the track, which was plain enough in the sandy bottom, that of a horse and two mules. Killbuck scrutinised the "sign," and puzzled over it a considerable time; and at last exclaimed—"Wagh! this sign 's as plain as mon beaver to me; look at that hos-track, boy; did ye ever see that afore?"

"*Well*, I have!" answered La Bonté, peering down at it: "that ar shuffle-toe seems handy to me now, I *tell* you."

"The man as used to ride that hos is long gone under, but the hos, darn the old crittur, is old Bill Williams's, I'll swar by hook."

"Well, it aint nothin else," continued La Bonté, satisfying himself by a long look; "it's the old boy's hos as shure as shootin: and them Rapahos has rubbed him out at last, and raised his animals. Ho, boy! let's lift their hair."

"Agreed," answered Killbuck; and away they started in pursuit, determined to avenge the death of their old comrade.

They followed the track through the bottom and into the stream, which it crossed, and, passing a few yards up the bank, entered the water again, when they could see nothing more of it. Puzzled at this, they sought on each side the river, but in vain; and, not wishing to lose more time in the search, they proceeded through the timber on the banks to find a good camping-place for the night, which had been their object in riding in advance of the cavallada. On the left bank, a short distance before them, was a heavy growth of timber, and the river ran in one place close to a high bluff, between which and the water was an almost impervious thicket of plum and cherry trees. The grove of timber ended before it reached this point, and but few scattered trees grew in the little glade which intervened, and which was covered with tolerable grass. This being fixed upon as an excellent camp, the two mountaineers rode into the glade, and dismounted close to the plum and cherry thicket, which formed almost a wall before them, and an excellent shelter from the wind. Jumping off their horses, they were in the act of removing the saddles from their backs, when a shrill neigh burst from the thicket not two yards behind them; a rustling in the bushes followed, and presently a man dressed in buck-skin, and rifle in hand, burst out of the tangled brush, exclaiming in an angry voice—

"Do'ee hy'ar now? I was nigh upon gut-shootin some of e'e—I was now; thought e'e was darned Rapahos, I did, and câched right off."

"Ho, Bill! what, old hos! not gone under yet?" cried both the hunters. "Give us your paw."

"Do'ee now, if hy'ar ar'nt them boys as was rubbed out on Lodge Pole (creek) a time ago. Do'ee hyar? if this aint 'some' now, I would'nt say so."

Leaving old Bill Williams and our two friends to exchange their rough but hearty greetings, we will glance at that old worthy's history since the time when we left him câching in the fire and smoke on the Indian battle-ground in the Rocky Mountains. He had escaped fire and smoke, or he would not have been here on Arkansa with his old grizzled Nez-percé steed. On that occasion, the veteran mountaineer had lost his two pack-animals and all his beaver. He was not the man, however, to want a horse or mule as long as an Indian village was near at hand. Skulking, therefore, by day in cañons and deep gorges of the mountains, and travelling by night, he followed closely on the trail of the victorious savages, bided his time, struck his "coup," and recovered a pair of pack-horses, which was all he required. Ever since, he had been trapping alone in all parts of the mountains; had visited the rendezvous but twice for short periods, and then with full packs of beaver; and was now on his way to Bent's Fort, to dispose of his present loads of peltry, enjoy one good carouse on Taos whisky, and then return to some hole or corner in the mountains which he knew of, to follow in the spring his solitary avocation. He too had had his share of troubles, and had many Indian scrapes, but passed safely through all, and scarcely cared to talk of what he had done, so matter-of-fact to him were the most extraordinary of his perilous adventures.

Arrived at Bent's Fort, the party disposed of their cavallada, and then—respect for the pardonable weaknesses of our mountain friends prompts us to draw a veil over the furious orgies that ensued. A number of hunters and trappers were "in" from their hunting-grounds, and a village of Shians and some lodges of Kioways were camped round the fort. As long as the liquor lasted, and there was good store of alcohol as well as of Taos whisky, the Arkansa resounded with furious mirth—not unmixed with graver scenes; for your mountaineer, ever quarrelsome in his cups, is quick to give and take offence, when rifles alone can settle the difference, and much blood is spilt upon the prairie in his wild and frequent quarrels.

Bent's Fort is situated on the left or northern bank of the river Arkansa, about one hundred miles from the foot of the Rocky Mountains—on a low and level bluff of the prairie which here slopes gradually to the water's-edge. The walls are built entirely of adobes—or sun-burned bricks—in the form of a hollow square, at two corners of which are circular flanking towers of the same material. The entrance is by a large gateway into the square, round which are the rooms occupied by the traders and employés of the host. These are small in size, with walls coloured by a white-wash made of clay found in the prairie. Their flat roofs are defended along the exterior by parapets of adobe, to serve as a cover to marksmen firing from the top; and along the coping grow plants of cactus of all the varieties common in the plains. In the centre of the square is the press for packing the furs; and there are three large rooms, one used as a store and magazine, another as a council-room, where the Indians assemble for their "talks," whilst the third is the common dining-hall, where the traders, trappers, and hunters, and all employés, feast upon the best provender the game-covered country affords. Over the culinary department presided of late years a fair lady of colour, Charlotte by name, who was, as she loved to say, "de onlee lady in de dam Injun country," and who moreover was celebrated from Long's Peak to the Cumbres Espanolás for slapjacks and pumpkin pies.

Here congregate at certain seasons the merchants of the plains and mountains, with their stocks of peltry. Chiefs of the Shian, the Kioway, and Arapahó, sit in solemn conclave with the head traders, and smoke the "calumet" over their real and imaginary grievances. Now O-cun-no-whurst, the Yellow Wolf, grand chief of the Shian, complains of certain grave offences against the dignity of his nation! A trader from the "big lodge" (the fort) has been in his village, and before the trade was opened, in laying the customary chief's gift "on the prairie"* has not "opened his hand," but "squeezed out his present between his fingers," grudgingly, and with too sparing measure. This was hard to bear, but the Yellow Wolf would say no more!

Tah-kai-buhl, or, "he who jumps," is deputed from the Kioway to warn the white traders not to proceed to the Canadian to trade with the Comanche. That nation is mad—a "heap mad" with the whites, and has "dug up the hatchet" to "rub out" all who enter its country. The Kioway loves the paleface, and gives him warning (and "he who jumps" looks as if he deserves something "on the prairie" for his information).

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* Indian expression for a free gift.

Shawh-noh-qua-mish, "the peeled lodge-pole," is there to excuse his Arapahó braves, who lately made free with a band of horses belonging to the fort. He promises the like shall never happen again, and he, Shawh-noh-qua-mish, speaks with a "single tongue." Over clouds of tobacco and kinnik-kinnik, these grave affairs are settled and terms arranged.

In the corral, groups of leather-clad mountaineers, with "decks" of "euker" and "seven up," gamble away their hard-earned peltries. The employés—mostly St Louis Frenchmen and Canadian voyageurs—are pressing packs of buffalo skins, beating robes, or engaged in other duties of a trading fort. Indian squaws, the wives of mountaineers, strut about in all the pride of beads and fofarrow, jingling with bells and bugles, and happy as paint can make them. Hunters drop in with animals packed with deer or buffalo meat to supply the fort; Indian dogs look anxiously in at the gateway, fearing to enter and encounter their natural enemies, the whites: and outside the fort, at any hour of the day or night, one may safely wager to see a dozen cayeutes or prairie wolves loping round, or seated on their haunches, and looking gravely on, waiting patiently for some chance offal to be cast outside. Against the walls, groups of

Indians, too proud to enter without an invitation, lean, wrapped in their buffalo robes, sulky and evidently ill at ease to be so near the whites without a chance of fingering their scalp-locks; their white lodges shining in the sun, at a little distance from the river-banks; their horses feeding in the plain beyond.

The appearance of the fort is very striking, standing as it does hundreds of miles from any settlement, on the vast and lifeless prairie, surrounded by hordes of hostile Indians, and far out of reach of intercourse with civilised man; its mud-built walls inclosing a little garrison of a dozen hardy men, sufficient to hold in check the numerous tribes of savages ever thirsting for their blood. Yet the solitary stranger passing this lone fort, feels proudly secure when he comes within sight of the "stars and stripes" which float above the walls.

CHAPTER VIII.

Again we must take a jump with La Bonté over a space of several months; when we find him, in company of half a dozen trappers, amongst them his inseparable compañero Killbuck, camped on the Greenhorn creek, *en route* to the settlements of New Mexico. They have a few mules packed with beaver for the Taos market: but this expedition has been planned more for pleasure than profit—a journey to Taos valley being the only civilised relaxation coveted by the mountaineers. Not a few of the present band are bound thither with matrimonial intentions; the belles of Nuevo Mejico being to them the *ne plus ultra* of female perfection, uniting most conspicuous personal charms (although coated with cosmetic *alegria*—an herb, with the juice of which the women of Mexico hideously bedaub their faces), with all the hard-working industry of Indian squaws. The ladies, on their part, do not hesitate to leave the paternal abodes, and eternal tortilla-making, to share the perils and privations of the American mountaineers in the distant wilderness. Utterly despising their own countrymen, whom they are used to contrast with the dashing white hunters who swagger in all the pride of fringe and leather through their towns—they, as is but natural, gladly accept husbands from the latter class; preferring the stranger, who possesses the heart and strong right arm to defend them, to the miserable cowardly "peládos," who hold what little they have on sufferance of savage Indians, but one degree superior to themselves.

Certainly no band of hunters that ever appeared in the vale of Taos, numbered in its ranks a properer lot of lads than those now camped on Greenhorn, intent on matrimonial foray into the settlements of New Mexico. There was young Dick Wooton, who was "some" for his inches, being six feet six, and as straight and strong as the barrel of his long rifle. Shoulder to shoulder with this "boy," stood Rube Herring, and not a hair's-breadth difference in height or size was there between them. Killbuck, though mountain winters had sprinkled a few snow-flakes on his head, *looked up* to neither; and La Bonté held his own with any mountaineer who ever set a trap in sight of Long's Peak or the Snowy Range. Marcellin—who, though a Mexican, despised his people and abjured his blood, having been all his life in the mountains with the white hunters—looked down easily upon six feet and odd inches. In form a Hercules, he had the symmetry of an Apollo; with strikingly handsome features, and masses of long black hair hanging from his slouching beaver over the shoulders of his buckskin hunting shirt. He, as he was wont to say, was "no dam Spaniard, but 'mountainee man,' wagh!" Chabonard, a half-breed, was not lost in the crowd; —and, the last in height, but the first in every quality which constitutes excellence in a mountaineer, whether of indomitable courage, or perfect indifference to death or danger; with an iron frame capable of withstanding hunger, thirst, heat, cold, fatigue, and hardships of every kind; of wonderful presence of mind, and endless resources in times of peril; with the instinct of an animal, and the moral courage of a *man*—who was "taller" for his inches than KIT CARSON, paragon of mountaineers?* Small in stature, and slenderly limbed, but with muscles of wire, with a fair complexion and quiet intelligent features, to look at Kit none would suppose that the mild-looking being before him was an incarnate devil in Indian fight, and had raised more hair from head of Redskins than any two men in the western country; and yet, thirty winters had scarcely planted a line or furrow on his clean-shaven face. No name, however, was better known in the mountains—from Yellow Stone to Spanish Peaks, from Missouri to Columbia River—than that of Kit Carson, "raised" in Boonlick, county of Missouri State, and a credit to the diggins that gave him birth.

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* Since the time of which we speak, Kit Carson has distinguished himself in guiding the several U. S. exploring expeditions, under Frémont, across the Rocky Mountains, and to all parts of Oregon and California; and for his services, the President of the United States presented the gallant Mountaineer with the commission of lieutenant in a newly raised regiment of mounted riflemen, of which his old leader Frémont is appointed colonel.

On Huerfano or Orphan Creek, so called from an isolated *butte* which stands on a prairie near the stream, our party fell in with a village of Yuta Indians, at that time hostile to the whites. Both parties were preparing for battle, when Killbuck, who spoke the language, went forward with signs of peace, and after a talk with several chiefs, entered into an armistice, each party agreeing not to molest the other. After trading for a few deerskins, which the Yutas are celebrated for dressing delicately fine, the trappers moved hastily on out of such dangerous company, and camped under the mountain on Oak Creek, where they forted in a strong position, and constructed a corral in which to secure their animals at night. At this point is a tolerable pass through the mountains, where a break occurs in a range, whence they gradually decrease in magnitude until they meet the sierras of Mexico, which connect the two mighty chains of the Andes and the Rocky Mountains. From the summit of the dividing ridge, to the eastward, a view is had of the vast sea of prairie which stretches away from the base of the mountains, in dreary barrenness, for nearly a thousand miles, until it meets the fertile valley of the great Missouri. Over this boundless expanse, nothing breaks the uninterrupted solitude of the view. Not a tree or atom of foliage relieves the eye; for the lines of scattered timber which belt the streams running from the mountains, are lost in the shadow of their stupendous height, and beyond this nothing is seen but the bare surface of the rolling prairie. In no other part of the chain are the grand characteristics of the Far West more strikingly displayed than from this pass. The mountains here rise, on the eastern side, abruptly from the plain, and the view over the great prairies is not therefore obstructed by intervening ridges. To the westward the eye sweeps over the broken spurs which stretch from the main range in every direction; whilst distant peaks, for the most part snow-covered, are seen at intervals rising isolated above the range. On all sides the scene is wild and dismal.

Crossing by this pass, the trappers followed the Yuta trail over a plain, skirting a pine-covered ridge, in which countless herds of antelope, tame as sheep, were pasturing. Numerous creeks intersect it, well timbered with oak, pine, and cedar, and well stocked with game of all kinds. On the eleventh day from leaving the Huerfano, they struck the Taos valley settlement on Arroyo Hondo, and pushed on at once to the village of Fernandez—sometimes, but improperly, called Taos. As the dashing band clattered through the village, the dark eyes of the reboso-wrapped muchachas peered from the doors of the adobe houses, each mouth armed with cigarito, which was at intervals removed to allow utterance to the salutation to each hunter as he trotted past of *Adios Americanos,*—"Welcome to Fernandez!" and then they hurried off to prepare for the fandango, which invariably followed the advent of the mountaineers. The men, however, seemed scarcely so well pleased; but leaned sulkily against the walls, their sarapes turned over the left shoulder, and concealing the lower part of the face, the hand appearing from its upper folds only to remove the eternal cigarro from their lips. They, from under their broad-brimmed sombreros, scowled with little affection upon the stalwart hunters, who clattered past them, scarcely deigning to glance at the sullen Peládos, but paying incomprehensible compliments to the buxom wenches who smiled at them from the doors. Thus exchanging salutations, they rode up to the house of an old mountaineer, who had long been settled here with a New Mexican wife, and who was the recognised entertainer of the hunters when they visited Taos valley, receiving in exchange such peltry as they brought with them.

No sooner was it known that Los Americanos had arrived, than nearly all the householders of Fernandez presented themselves to offer the use of their "salas" for the fandango which invariably celebrated their arrival. This was always a profitable event; for as the mountaineers were generally pretty well "flush" of cash when on their "spree," and as open-handed as an Indian could wish, the sale of whisky, with which they regaled all comers, produced a handsome return to the fortunate individual whose room was selected for the fandango. On this occasion the sala of the Alcalde Don Cornelio Vegil was selected and put in order; a general invitation was distributed; and all the dusky beauties of Fernandez were soon engaged in arraying themselves for the fête. Off came the coats of dirt and "alegnía" which had bedaubed their faces since the last "funcion," leaving their cheeks clear and clean. Water was profusely used, and their cuerpos were doubtless astonished by the unusual lavation. Their long black hair was washed and combed, plastered behind their ears, and plaited into a long queue, which hung down their backs. *Enaguas* of gaudy colour (red most affected) were donned, fastened round the waist with ornamented belts, and above this a snow-white *camisita* of fine linen was the only covering, allowing a prodigal display of their charms. Gold and silver ornaments, of antiquated pattern, decorate their ears and necks; and massive crosses of the precious metals, wrought from the gold or silver of their own placeres, hang pendant on their breasts. The enagua or petticoat, reaching about halfway between the knee and ancle, displays their well-turned limbs, destitute of stockings, and their tiny feet, thrust into quaint little shoes (*zapatitos*) of Cinderellan dimensions. Thus equipped, with the reboso drawn over their heads and faces, out of the folds of which their brilliant eyes flash like lightning, and each pretty mouth armed with its cigarito, they coquettishly enter the fandango.* Here, at one end of a long room, are seated the musicians, their instruments being generally a species of guitar, called heaca, a *bandolin*, and an Indian drum, called *tombé*—one of each. Round the room groups of New Mexicans lounge, wrapped in the eternal sarape, and smoking of course, scowling with jealous eyes at the more favoured mountaineers. These, divested of their hunting-coats of buckskins, appear in their bran-new shirts of gaudy calico, and close fitting buckskin pantaloons, with long fringes down the outside seam from the hip to the ancle; with moccasins, ornamented with bright beads and porcupine quills. Each, round his waist, wears his mountain-belt and scalp-knife, ominous of the company he is in, and some have pistols sticking in their belt.

The dances—save the mark!—are without form or figure, at least those in which the white hunters sport the "fantastic toe." Seizing his partner round the waist with the gripe of a grisly bear, each mountaineer whirls and twirls, jumps and stamps; introduces Indian steps used in the "scalp" or "buffalo" dances, whooping occasionally with unearthly cry, and then subsiding into the jerking step, raising each foot alternately from the ground, so much in vogue in Indian ballets. The hunters have the floor all to themselves. The Mexicans have no chance in such physical force dancing; and if a dancing Pelàdo* steps into the ring, a lead-like thump from a galloping mountaineer quickly sends him sprawling, with the considerate remark—"Quit, you darned Spaniard! you can't 'shine' in this crowd."

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* The word *fandango*, in New Mexico, is not applied to the peculiar dance known in Spain by that name, but designates a ball or dancing meeting.

During a lull, guagés† filled with whisky go the rounds—offered to and seldom refused by the ladies—sturdily quaffed by the mountaineers, and freely swallowed by the Pelàdos, who drown their jealousy and envious hate of their entertainers in potent aguardiente. Now, as the guagés are oft refilled and as often drained, and as night advances, so do the spirits of the mountaineers become more boisterous, while their attentions to their partners become warmer—the jealousy of the natives waxes hotter thereat—and they begin to show symptoms of resenting the endearments which the mountaineers bestow upon their wives and sweethearts. And now, when the room is filled to crowding,—with two hundred people, swearing, drinking, dancing, and shouting—the half-dozen Americans monopolising the fair, to the evident disadvantage of at least threescore scowling Pelàdos, it happens that one of these, maddened by whisky and the green-eyed monster, suddenly seizes a fair one from the waist-encircling arm of a mountaineer, and pulls her from her partner. Wagh!—La Bonté—it is he—stands erect as a pillar for a moment, then raises his hand to his mouth, and gives a ringing war-whoop—jumps upon the rash Peládo, seizes him by the body as if he were a child, lifts him over his head, and dashes him with the force of a giant against the wall.

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* A nickname for the idle fellows hanging about a Mexican town, translated into "Greasers" by the Americans.

† Cask-shaped gourds.

The war, long threatened, has commenced; twenty Mexicans draw their knives and rush upon La Bonté, who stands his ground, and sweeps them down with his ponderous fist, one after another, as they throng around him. "Howgh-owgh-owgh-owgh-h!" the well-known warhoop, bursts from the throats of his companions, and on they rush to the rescue. The women scream, and block the door in their eagerness to escape; and thus the Mexicans are compelled to stand their ground and fight. Knives glitter in the light, and quick thrusts are given and parried. In the centre of the room the whites stand shoulder to shoulder—covering the floor with Mexicans by their stalwart blows; but the odds are fearful against them, and other assailants crowd up to supply the place of those who fall.

The alarm being given by the shrieking women, reinforcements of Peládos rushed to the scene of action, but could not enter the room, which was already full. The odds began to tell against the mountaineers, when Kit Carson's quick eye caught sight of a high stool or stone, supported by three long heavy legs. In a moment he had cleared his way to this, and in another the three legs were broken off and in the hands of himself, Dick Wooton, and La Bonté. Sweeping them round their heads, down came the heavy weapons amongst the Mexicans with wonderful effect—each blow, dealt by the nervous arms of Wooton and La Bonté, mowing down a good half-dozen of the assailants. At this the mountaineers gave a hearty whoop, and charged the wavering enemy with such resistless vigour, that they gave way and bolted through the door, leaving the floor strewed with wounded, many most dangerously; for, as may be imagined, a thrust from the keen scalp-knife by the nervous arm of a mountaineer was no baby blow, and seldom failed to strike home—up to the "Green River"* on the blade.

The field being won, the whites, too, beat a quick retreat to the house where they were domiciled, and where they had left their rifles. Without their trusty weapons they felt, indeed, unarmed; and not knowing how the affair just over would be followed up, lost no time in making preparations for defence. However, after great blustering on the part of the prefecto, who, accompanied by a *posse comitatus* of "Greasers," proceeded to the house, and demanded the surrender of all concerned in the affair—which proposition was received with a yell of derision—the business was compounded by the mountaineers promising to give sundry dollars to the friends of two of the Mexicans, who died during the night of their wounds, and to pay for a certain amount of masses to be sung for the repose of their souls in purgatory. Thus the affair blew over; but for several days the mountaineers never showed themselves in the streets of Fernandez without their rifles on their shoulders, and refrained from attending fandangos for the present, and until the excitement had cooled down.

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* The knives used by the hunters and trappers are manufactured at the "Green River" works, and have that name stamped upon the blade. Hence the mountain term for doing any thing effectually is "up to Green River."

A bitter feeling, however, existed on the part of the men; and one or two offers of a matrimonial nature were rejected by the papas of certain ladies who had been wooed by some of the white hunters, and their hands formally demanded from the respective padres.

La Bonté had been rather smitten with the charms of one Dolores Salazar—a buxom lass, more than three parts Indian in her blood, but confessedly the "beauty" of the Vale of Taos. She, by dint of eye, and of nameless acts of elaborate coquetry, with which the sex so universally bait their traps, whether in the salons of Belgravia, or the rancherias of New Mexico, contrived to make considerable havoc in the heart of our mountaineer; and when once

Dolores saw she had made an impression, she followed up her advantage with all the arts the most civilised of her sex could use when fishing for a husband.

La Bonté, however, was too old a hunter to be easily caught; and before committing himself, he sought the advice of his tried companion Killbuck. Taking him to a retired spot without the village, he drew out his pipe and charged it—seated himself cross-legged on the ground, and, with Indian gravity, composed himself for a "talk."

"Ho, Killbuck!" he began, touching the ground with the bowl of his pipe, and then turning the stem upwards for "*medicine*"—"Hyar's a child feels squamptious like, and nigh upon 'gone beaver,' *he* is—Wagh!"

"Wagh!" exclaimed Killbuck, all attention.

"Old hos," continued the other, "thar's no use câching anyhow what a niggur feels—so hyar's to 'put out.' You're good for beaver *I* know; at deer or buffler, or darned red Injun either, you're 'some.' Now that's a fact. 'Off-hand,' or 'with a rest,' you make 'em 'come.' You knows the 'sign' of Injuns slick—Blackfoot or Sioux, Pawnee or Burntwood, Zeton, Rapaho, Shian, or Shoshonée, Yutah, Piyutah, or Yamhareek—their trail's as plain as writin', old hos, to you."

"Wagh!" grunted Killbuck, blushing bronze at all these compliments.

"Your sight ain't bad. Elks is elk; black-tail

~~deer ain't~~ white-tails; and b'ar is b'ar to you, and nothin' else, a long mile off and more."

"Wa-agh!"

"Thar ain't a track as leaves its mark upon the plains or mountains but you can read off-hand; that I've see'd myself. But tell me, old hos, can you make understand the 'sign' as shows itself in a woman's breast?"

Killbuck removed the pipe from his mouth, raised his head, and puffed a rolling cloud of smoke into the air,—knocked the ashes from the bowl, likewise made his "medicine"—and answered thus:—

"From Red River, away up north amongst the Britishers, to Heely (Gila) in the Spanish country—from old Missoura to the Sea of Californy, I've trapped and hunted. I knows the Injuns and thar 'sign,' and they knows *me*, I'm thinkin. Thirty winters has snowed on me in these hyar mountains, and a niggur or a Spaniard* would larn 'some' in that time. This old tool" (tapping his rifle) "shoots 'center' *she* does; and if thar's game afoot, this child knows 'bull' from 'cow,' and ought to could. That deer is deer, and goats is goats, is plain as paint to any but a greenhorn. Beaver's a cunning crittur, but I've trapped a 'heap;' and at killing meat when meat's a-running, I'll 'shine' in the biggest kind of crowd. For twenty year I packed a squaw along. Not one, but a many. First I had a

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* Always alluding to Mexicans, who are invariably called Spaniards by the Western Americans.

Blackfoot—the darndest slut as ever cried for fofarrow. I lodge-poled her on Colter's Creek, and made her quit. My buffler hos, and as good as four packs of beaver, I gave for old Bull-tail's daughter. He was head chief of the Ricaree, and 'came' nicely 'round' me. Thar was'nt enough scarlet cloth, nor beads, nor vermilion in Sublette's packs for her. Traps wouldn't buy her all the fofarrow she wanted; and in two years I'd sold her to Cross-Eagle for one of Jake Hawkin's guns—this very one I hold in my hands. Then I tried the Sioux, the Shian, and a Digger from the other side, who made the best moccasin as ever *I* wore. She was the best of all, and was rubbed out by the Yutas in the Bayou Salade. Bad was the best; and after she was gone under I tried no more.

"Afore I left the settlements I know'd a white gal, and she was some punkins. I have never seed nothing as 'ould beat her. Red blood won't 'shine' any ways you fix it; and though I'm h— for 'sign,' a woman's breast is the hardest kind of rock to me, and leaves no trail that I can see of. I've hearn you talk of a gal in Memphis county; Mary Brand you called her oncest. The gal I said *I* know'd, her name I disremember, but she stands before me as plain as Chimley Rock on Platte, and thirty year and more har'nt changed a feature in her face, to me.

"If you ask this child, he'll tell you to leave the Spanish slut to her Greasers, and hold on till you

take the trail to old Missoura, whar white and Christian gals are to be had for axing. Wagh!"

La Bonté rose to his feet. The mention of Mary Brand's name decided him; and he said—

"Darn the Spaniard! she can't shine with me; come, old hos! let's move."

And, shouldering their rifles, the two campañeros returned to the Ronch. More than one of the mountaineers had fulfilled the object of their journey, and had taken to themselves a partner from amongst the belles of Taos, and now they were preparing for their return to the mountains. Dick Wooton was the only unfortuate one. He had wooed a damsel whose parents peremptorily forbade their daughter to wed the hunter, and he therefore made ready for his departure with considerable regret.

The day came, however. The band of mountaineers were already mounted, and those with wives in charge were some hours on the road, leaving the remainder quaffing many a stirrup-cup before they left. Dick Wooton was as melancholy as a buffalo bull in spring; and as he rode down the village, and approached the house of his lady-love, who stood wrapped in reboso, and cigarito in mouth, on the sill of the door, he turned away his head as if dreading to say adios. La Bonté rode beside him, and a thought struck him.

"Ho, Dick!" he said, "thar's the gal, and thar's the mountains: shoot sharp's the word."

Dick instantly understood him, and was "himself again." He rode up to the girl as if to bid her adieu, and she came to meet him. Whispering one word, she put her foot upon his, was instantly seized round the waist, and placed upon the horn of his saddle. He struck spurs into his horse, and in a minute was out of sight, his three companions covering his retreat, and menacing with their rifles the crowd which was soon drawn to the spot by the cries of the girl's parents, who had been astonished spectators of the daring rape.

The trapper and his bride, however, escaped scatheless, and the whole party effected a safe passage of the mountains, and reached the Arkansa, where the band was broken up,—some proceeding to Bent's Fort, and others to the Platte, amongst whom were Killbuck and La Bonté, still in company.

These two once more betook themselves to trapping, the Yellow Stone being their chief hunting-ground. But we must again leap over months and years, rather than conduct the reader through all their perilous wanderings, and at last bring him back to the camp on Bijou, where we first introduced him to our mountaineers; and as we have already followed them on the Arapaho trail, which they pursued to recover their stolen animals from a band of that nation, we will once again seat ourselves at the camp on Boiling Spring, where they had met a strange hunter on a solitary expedition to the Bayou Salade, whose double-barrelled rifle had excited their wonder and curiosity.

From him they learned also that a large band of Mormons were wintering on the Arkansa, *en route* to the Great Salt Lake and Upper California; and as our hunters had before fallen in with the advanced guard of these fanatic emigrants, and felt no little wonder that such helpless people should undertake so long a journey through the wilderness, the stranger narrated to them the history of the sect, which we shall shortly transcribe for the benefit of the reader.

CHAPTER IX.

THE Mormons were originally of the sect known as "Latter-day Saints," which sect flourishes wherever Anglo-Saxon gulls are found in sufficient numbers to swallow the egregious nonsense of fanatic humbugs who fatten upon their credulity. In the United States they especially abounded; but, the creed becoming "slow," one Joe Smith, a *smart* man, arose from its ranks, and instilled a little life into the decaying sect.

Joe, better known as the "Prophet Joe," was taking his siesta one fine day, upon a hill in one of the New England States, when an angel suddenly appeared to him, and made known the locality of a new Bible or Testament, which contained the history of the lost tribes of Israel; that these tribes were no other than the Indian nations which possessed the continent of America at the time of its discovery, and the remains of which still existed in their savage state; that, through the agency of Joe, these were to be reclaimed, collected into the bosom of a church to be there established, according to principles which would be found in the wonderful book—and which church was gradually to receive into its bosom all other churches, sects, and persuasions, with "unanimity of belief and perfect brotherhood."

After a certain probation, Joe was led in body and spirit to the mountain; by the angel who first appeared to him, was pointed out the position of the wonderful book, which was covered by a flat stone, on which would be found two round pebbles, called Urim and Thummim, and through the agency of which the mystic characters inscribed on the pages of the book were to be deciphered and translated. Joe found the spot indicated without any difficulty, cleared away the earth, and discovered a hollow place formed by four flat stones; on removing the topmost one of which sundry plates of brass presented themselves, covered with quaint and antique carving; on the top lay Urim and Thummim (commonly known to the Mormons as Mummum and Thummum, the pebbles of wonderful virtue), through which the miracle of reading the plates of brass was to be performed.

Joe Smith, on whom the mantle of Moses had so suddenly fallen, carefully removed the plates and hid them, burying himself in woods and mountains whilst engaged in the work of translation. However, he made no secret of the important task imposed upon him, nor of the great work to which he had been called. Numbers at once believed him, but not a few were deaf to belief, and openly derided him. Being persecuted (as the sect declares, at the instigation of the authorities), and many attempts being made to steal his precious treasure, Joe, one fine night, packed his plates in a sack of beans, bundled them into a Jersey waggon, and made tracks for the West. Here he completed the great work of translation, and not long after gave to the world the "Book of Mormon," a work as bulky as the Bible, and called "of Mormon," for so was the prophet named by whose hand the history of the lost tribes had been handed down in the plates of brass thus miraculously preserved for thousands of years, and brought to light through the agency of Joseph Smith.

The fame of the Book of Mormon spread over all America, and even to Great Britain and Ireland. Hundreds of proselytes flocked to Joe, to hear from his lips the doctrine of Mormonism; and in a very brief period the Mormons became a numerous and recognised sect, and Joe was at once, and by universal acclamation, installed as the head of the Mormon church, and was ever after known by the name of the "Prophet Joseph."

However, from certain peculiarities in their social system, the Mormons became rather unpopular in the settled States, and at length moved bodily into Missouri, where they purchased several tracts of land in the neighbourhood of Independence. Here they erected a large building, which they called the Lord's Store, where goods were collected on the common account, and retailed to members of the church at moderate prices. All this time their numbers increased in a wonderful manner, and immigrants from all parts of the States, as well as Europe, continually joined them. As they became stronger, they grew bolder and more arrogant in their projects. They had hitherto been considered as bad neighbours, on account of their pilfering propensities, and their utter disregard of the conventional decencies of society—exhibiting the greatest immorality, and endeavouring to establish amongst their society an indiscriminate concubinage. This was sufficient to produce an ill feeling against them on the part of their neighbours, the honest Missourians; but they still tolerated their presence amongst them, until the Saints openly proclaimed their intention of seizing upon the country, and expelling by force the present occupants—giving, as their reason, that it had been revealed to their prophets that the "Land of Zion" was to be possessed by themselves alone.

The sturdy Missourians began to think this was a little too strong, and that, if they permitted such aggressions any longer, they would be in a fair way of being despoiled of their lands by the Mormon interlopers. At length matters came to a crisis, and the Saints, emboldened by the impunity with which they had hitherto carried out their plans, issued a proclamation to the effect that all in that part of the country, who did not belong to the

Mormon persuasion, must "clear out," and give up possession of their lands and houses. The Missourians collected in a body, burned the printing-press from which the proclamation had emanated, seized several of the Mormon leaders, and, after inflicting a summary chastisement, "tarred and feathered" them, and let them go.

To revenge this insult, the Mormons marshalled an army of Saints, and marched upon Independence, threatening vengeance against the town and people. Here they met, however, a band of sturdy backwoodsmen, armed with rifles, determined to defend the town against the fanatic mob, who, not relishing their appearance, refused the encounter, and surrendered their leaders at the first demand. The prisoners were afterwards released, on condition that the Mormons left that part of the country without delay.

Accordingly, they once more "took up their beds and walked," crossing the Missouri to Clay County, where they established themselves, and would finally have formed a thriving settlement but for their own acts of wilful dishonesty. At this time their blasphemous mummery knew no bounds. Joe Smith, and other prophets who had lately arisen, were declared to be chosen of God; and it was the general creed that, on the day of judgment, the former would take his stand on the right hand of the judgment-seat, and that none would pass into the kingdom of heaven without his seal and touch.

One of their tenets was the faith in "spiritual matrimony." No woman, it appeared, would be admitted into heaven unless "passed" by a saint. To qualify them for this, it was necessary that the woman should first be received by the guaranteeing Mormon as an "earthly wife," in order that he did not pass in any of whom he had no knowledge. The consequence of this state of things may be imagined. The most debasing immorality was a precept of the order, and an almost universal concubinage existed amongst the sect, which at this time numbered at least forty thousand. Their disregard to the laws of decency and morality was such as could not be tolerated in any class of civilised society.

Again did the honest Missourians set their faces against this pernicious example, and when the county to which the Mormons had removed became more thickly settled, they rose to a man against the modern Gomorrah. The Mormons, by this time, having on their part gained considerable accession to their strength, thought to set the laws at defiance, organised and armed large bodies of men, in order to maintain the ascendency over the legitimate settlers, and bid fair to constitute an "imperium in imperio" in the State, and become the sole possessors of the public lands. This, of course, could not be tolerated. Governor Boggs at once ordered out a large force of State militia to put down this formidable demonstration, marched against the Mormons, and suppressed the insurrectionary movement without bloodshed.

From Clay County they moved still farther into the wilds, and settled at last in Caldwell County, where they built the town of "Far West," and here they remained for the space of three years.

During this time they were continually receiving converts to the faith, and many of the more ignorant country people were disposed to join them, being only deterred by the fear of incurring ridicule from the stronger-minded. The body of the Mormons seeing this, called upon their prophet, Joe Smith, to perform a miracle in public before all comers, which was to prove to those of their own people who still doubted the doctrine, the truth of what it advanced—(the power of performing miracles was stedfastly declared to be in their hands by the prophets)—and to enlist those who wavered in the Mormon cause.

The prophet instantly agreed, and declared that, upon a certain day, he would walk across the broad waters of the Missouri without wetting the soles of his feet. On the appointed day, the river banks were thronged by an expectant crowd. The Mormons sang hymns of praise in honour of their prophet, and were proud of the forthcoming miracle, which was to set finally at rest all doubt as to his power and sanctity.

This power of performing miracles and effecting miraculous cures of the sick, was so generally believed by the Mormons, that physic was never used amongst them. The prophets visited the beds of the sick, and laid hands upon them, and if, as of course was almost invariably the case, the patient died, it was attributed to his or her want of faith; but if, on the contrary, the patient recovered, there was universal glorification on the miraculous cure.

Joe Smith was a tall, fine-looking man, of most plausible address, and possessed the gift of the gab in great perfection. At the time appointed for the performance of the walking-water miracle, he duly attended on the river banks, and descended barefoot to the edge of the water.

"My brethren!" he exclaimed in a loud voice, "this day is a happy one to me, to us all, who venerate the great and only faith. The truth of our great and blessed doctrine will now be proved before the thousands I see around me. You have asked me to prove by a miracle that the power of the prophets of old has been given to me. I say unto you, not only to me, but to all who have faith. I have faith, and can perform miracles—that faith empowers me to walk across the broad surface of that mighty river without wetting the soles of my unworthy feet; but if ye are to *see* this miracle performed, it is necessary that ye have faith also, not only in yourselves, but in me. Have ye this faith in yourselves?"

"We have, we have!" roared the crowd.

"Have ye the faith in me, that ye believe I can perform this miracle?"

"We have, we have!" roared the crowd.

"Then," said Joe Smith, coolly walking away, "with such faith do ye know well that I *could*, but it boots not that I *should*, do it; therefore, my brethren, doubt no more"—and Joe put on his boots and disappeared.

Being again compelled to emigrate, the Mormons proceeded into the state of Illinois, where, in a beautiful situation, they founded the new Jerusalem, which, it had been declared by the prophet Mormon, should rise out of the wilderness of the west, and where the chosen people should be collected under one church, and governed by the elders after a "spiritual fashion."

The city of Nauvoo soon became a large and imposing settlement. An enormous building, called the Temple of Zion, was erected, half church half hôtel, in which Joe Smith and the other prophets resided—and large storehouses were connected with it, in which the goods and chattels belonging to the community were kept for the common good.

However, here, as every where else, they were continually quarrelling with their neighbours; and as their numbers increased, so did their audacity. A regular Mormon militia was again organised and armed, under the command of experienced officers, who had joined the sect; and now the authority of the state government was openly defied. In consequence, the executive took measures to put down the nuisance, and a regular war commenced, and was carried on for some time, with no little bloodshed on both sides; and this armed movement is known in the United States as the Mormon war. The Mormons, however, who, it seemed, were much better skilled in the use of the tongue than the rifle, succumbed: the city of Nauvoo was taken, Joe Smith and other ringleading prophets captured; and the former, in an attempt to escape from his place of confinement, was seized and shot. The Mormons declare he had long foretold his own fate, and that when the rifles of the firing party who were his executioners were levelled at the prophet's breast, a flash of lightning struck the weapons from their hands, and blinded for a time the eyes of the sacrilegious soldiers.

With the death of Joe Smith the prestige of the Mormon cause declined; but still thousands of proselytes joined them annually, and at last the state took measures to remove them altogether, as a body, from the country.

Once again they fled, as they themselves term it, before the persecutions of the ungodly! But this time their migration was far beyond the reach of their enemies, and their intention was to place between them the impassable barrier of the Rocky Mountains, and to seek a home and resting-place in the remote regions of the Far West.

This, the most extraordinary migration of modern times, commenced in the year 1845; but it was not till the following year that the great body of the Mormons turned their backs upon the settlements of the United States, and launched boldly out into the vast and barren prairies, without any fixed destination as a goal to their endless journey. For many months, long strings of Pittsburg and Conostaga waggons, with herds of horses and domestic cattle, wound their way towards the Indian frontier, with the intention of rendezvousing at Council Bluffs on the Upper Missouri. Here thousands of waggons were congregated, with their tens of thousands of men, women, and children, anxiously waiting the route from the elders of the church, who on their parts scarcely knew whither to direct the steps of the vast crowd they had set in motion. At length the indefinite destination of Oregon and California was proclaimed, and the long train of emigrants took up the line of march. It was believed the Indian tribes would immediately fraternise with the Mormons, on their approaching their country; but the Pawnees quickly undeceived them by running off with their stock on every opportunity. Besides these losses, at every camp, horses, sheep, and oxen strayed away and were not recovered, and numbers died from fatigue and want of provender; so that, before they had been many weeks on their journey, nearly all their cattle, which they had brought to stock their new country, were dead or missing, and those that were left were in most miserable condition.

They had started so late in the season, that the greater part were compelled to winter on the Platte, on Grand Island, and in the vicinity, where they endured the greatest privations and suffering from cold and hunger. Many who had lost their stock lived upon roots and pig-nuts; and scurvy, in a most malignant form, and other disorders, carried off numbers of the wretched fanatics.

Amongst them were many substantial farmers from all parts of the United States, who had given up their valuable farms, sold off all their property, and were dragging their irresponsible and unfortunate families into the wilderness—carried away by their blind and fanatic zeal in this absurd and incredible faith. There were also many poor wretches from different parts of England, mostly of the farm-labouring class, with wives and families, crawling along with helpless and almost idiotic despair, but urged forward by the fanatic leaders of the movement, who promised them a land flowing with milk and honey to reward them for all their hardships and privations.

Their numbers were soon reduced by want and disease. When too late, they often wished themselves back in the old country, and sighed many a time for the beer and bacon of former days, now preferable to the dry buffalo meat (but seldom obtainable) of the Far West.

Evil fortune pursued the Mormons, and dogged their steps. The year following, some struggled on towards the promised land, and of these a few reached Oregon and California. Many were killed by hostile Indians; many perished of hunger, cold, and thirst, in passing the great wilderness; and many returned to the States, penniless and crestfallen, and heartily cursing the moment in which they had listened to the counsels of the Mormon prophet. The numbers who reached their destination of Oregon, California, and the Great Salt Lake, are computed at 20,000, of whom the United States had an unregretted riddance.

One party had followed the troops of the American government intended for the conquest of New Mexico and the Californias. Of these a battalion was formed, and part of it proceeded to Upper California; but the way being impracticable for waggons, some seventy families proceeded up the Arkansa, and wintered near the mountains, intending to cross to the Platte the ensuing spring, and join the main body of emigrants on their way by the south pass of the Rocky Mountains.

In the wide and well-timbered bottom of the Arkansa, the Mormons had erected a street of log shanties, in which to pass the inclement winter. These were built of rough logs of cottonwood, laid one above the other, the interstices filled with mud, and rendered impervious to wind or wet. At one end of the row of shanties was built the "church" or temple—a long building of huge logs, in which the prayer-meetings and holdings-forth took place. The band wintering on the Arkansa were a far better class than the generality of Mormons, and comprised many wealthy and respectable farmers from the western states, most of whom were accustomed to the life of woodmen, and were good hunters. Thus they were enabled to support their families upon the produce of their rifles, frequently sallying out to the nearest point of the mountains with a waggon, which they would bring back loaded with buffalo, deer, and elk meat, thereby saving the necessity of killing any of their stock of cattle, of which but few remained.

The mountain hunters found this camp a profitable market for their meat and deer-skins, with which the Mormons were now compelled to clothe themselves, and resorted there for that purpose—to say nothing of the attraction of the many really beautiful Missourian girls who sported their tall graceful figures at the frequent fandangoes. Dancing and preaching go hand in hand in Mormon doctrine, and the "temple" was generally cleared for a hop two or three times during the week, a couple of fiddles doing the duty of orchestra. A party of mountaineers came in one day, bringing some buffalo meat and dressed deer-skins, and were invited to be present at one of these festivals.

Arrived at the temple, they were rather taken aback by finding themselves in for a sermon, which one of the elders delivered preparatory to the "physical exercises." The preacher was one Brown —called, by reason of his commanding a company of Mormon volunteers, "Cap'en Brown"—a hard-featured, black-coated man of five-and-forty, correctly got up in black continuations, and white handkerchief round his neck, a costume seldom seen at the foot of the Rocky Mountains. The Cap'en, rising, cleared his voice, and thus commenced, first turning to an elder (with whom there was a little rivalry in the way of preaching):— "Brother Dowdle!"—(brother Dowdle blushed and nodded: he was a long tallow-faced man, with black hair combed over his face)—"I feel like holding forth a little this afternoon, before we glorify the Lord,—a—a—in the—a—holy dance. As there are a many strange gentlemen now—a—present, it's about right to tell 'em—a—what our doctrine just is, and so I tells 'em right off what the Mormons is. They are the chosen of the Lord; they are the children of glory, persecuted by the hand of man: they flies here to the wilderness, and, amongst the *Injine* and the buffler, they lifts up their heads, and cries with a loud voice, Susannah, and hurray for the promised land! Do you believe it? I *know* it.

"They wants to know whar we're going. Whar the church goes—thar we goes. Yes, to hell, and pull the devil off his throne—that's what we'll do. Do you believe it? I *know* it.

"Thar's milk and honey in that land as we're goin' to, and the lost tribes of Israel is thar, and will jine us. They say as we'll starve on the road, bekase thar's no game and no water; but thar's manna up in heaven, and it 'll rain on us, and thar's prophets among us can make the water 'come.' Can't they, brother Dowdle?"

"*Well*, they can."

"And now, what have the Gen*tiles* and the Phil*istines* to say against us Mormons? They says we're thieves, and steal hogs; yes, d—— 'em! they say we has as many wives as we like. So we have. I've twenty—forty, myself, and mean to have as many more as I can get. But it's to pass unfortunate females into heaven that I has 'em—yes, to prevent 'em going to roaring flames and damnation that I does it.

"Brother Dowdle," he continued, in a hoarse, low voice, "I've 'give out,' and think we'd better begin the exercises grettful to the Lord."

Brother Dowdle rose, and, after saying that "he didn't feel like saying much, begged to remind all hands, that dancing was solemn like, to be done with proper devotion, and not with laughing and talking, of which he hoped to hear little or none; that joy was to be in their hearts, and not on their lips; that they danced for the glory of the Lord, and not their own amusement, as did the Gen*tiles*." After saying thus, he called upon brother Ezra to "strike up:" sundry couples stood forth, and the ball commenced.

Ezra of the violin was a tall, shambling Missourian, with a pair of "homespun" pantaloons thrust into the legs of his heavy boots. Nodding his head in time with the music, he occasionally gave instructions to such of the dancers as were at fault, singing them to the tune he was playing, in a dismal nasal tone,—

"Down the centre—hands across,"
"You, Jake Herring—thump it,"
"Now, you all go right a-head—
Every one of you hump it.
Every one of you—*hump it.*"

The last words being the signal that all should clap the steam on, which they did *con amore*, and with comical seriousness.

A mountaineer, Rube Herring, whom we have more than once met in the course of this narrative, became a convert to the Mormon creed, and held forth its wonderful doctrines to such of the incredulous trappers as he could induce to listen to him. Old Rube stood nearly six feet six in height, and was spare and bony in make. He had picked up a most extraordinary cloth coat amongst the Mormons, which had belonged to some one his equal in stature. This coat, which was of a snuff-brown colour, had its waist about a hand's span from the nape of Rube's neck, or about a yard above its proper position, and the skirts reached to his ancles. A slouching felt-hat covered his head, from which long black hair escaped, hanging in flakes over his lantern-jaws. His pantaloons of buckskin were shrunk with wet, and reached midway between his knees and ancles, and his huge feet were encased in moccasins of buffalo-cow skin.

Rube was never without the book of Mormon in his hand, and his sonorous voice might be heard, at all hours of the day and night, reading passages from its wonderful pages. He stood the badgering of the hunters with most perfect good humour, and said there never was such a book as that ever before printed; that the Mormons were the "biggest kind" of prophets, and theirs the best faith ever man believed in.

Rube had let out one day that he was to be hired as guide by this party of Mormons to the Great Salt Lake; but their destination being changed, and his services not required, a wonderful change came over his mind. He was, as usual, book of Mormon in hand, when brother Brown announced the change in their plans; at which the book was cast into the Arkansa, and Rube exclaimed—"Cuss your darned Mummum and Thummum! thar's not one among you knows 'fat cow' from 'poor bull,' and you may go h—— for me." And turning away, old Rube spat out a quid of tobacco and his Mormonism together.

Amongst the Mormons was an old man, named Brand, from Memphis county, state of Tennessee, with a family of a daughter and two sons, the latter with their wives and children. Brand was a wiry old fellow, nearly seventy years of age, but still stout and strong, and wielded axe or rifle better than many a younger man. If truth be told, he was not a very red-hot Mormon, and had joined them as much for the sake of company to California, whither he had long resolved to emigrate, as from any implicit credence in the faith. His sons were strapping fellows, of the sterling stuff that the Western pioneers are made of; his daughter Mary, a fine woman of thirty, for whose state of single blessedness there must doubtless have been sufficient reason; for she was not only remarkably handsome, but was well known in Memphis to be the best-tempered and most industrious young woman in those diggings. She was known to have received several advantageous offers, all of which she had refused; and report said, that it was from having been disappointed in very early life in an *affaire du cœur*, at an age when such wounds sometimes strike strong and deep, leaving a scar difficult to heal. Neither his daughter, nor any of his family, had been converted to the Mormon doctrine, but had ever kept themselves aloof, and refused to join or associate with them; and, for this reason, the family had been very unpopular with the Mormon families on the Arkansa; and hence, probably, one great reason why they now started alone on their journey.

Spring had arrived, and it was time the Mormons should proceed on their march; but whether already tired of the sample they had had of life in the wilderness, or fearful of encountering the perils of the Indian country, not one amongst them, with the exception of old Brand, seemed inclined to pursue the journey farther. That old backwoodsman, however, was not to be deterred, but declared his intention of setting out alone, with his family, and risking all the dangers to be anticipated.

One fine sunny evening in April of 1847, when the cottonwoods on the banks of the Arkansa began to put forth their buds, and robins and blue-birds—harbingers of spring—were hopping, with gaudy plumage, through the thickets, three white-tilted Conostoga waggons emerged from the timbered bottom of the river, and rumbled slowly over the prairie, in the direction of the Platte's waters. Each waggon was drawn by eight oxen, and contained a portion of the farming implements and household utensils of the Brand family. The teams were driven by the young boys, the men following in rear with shouldered rifles—Old Brand himself mounted on an Indian horse, leading the advance. The women were safely housed under the shelter of the waggon tilts, and out of the first the mild face of Mary Brand smiled adieu to many of her old companions who had accompanied them thus far, and now wished them "God-speed" on their long journey. Some mountaineers, too, galloped up, dressed in buckskin, and gave them rough greeting—warning the men to keep their "eyes skinned," and look out for the Arapahos, who were out on the waters of the Platte. Presently all retired, and then the huge waggons and the little company were rolling on their solitary way through the deserted prairies—passing the first of the many thousand miles which lay between them and the "setting sun," as the Indians style the distant regions of the Far West. And on, without casting a look behind him, doggedly and boldly marched old Brand, followed by his sturdy family.

They made but a few miles that evening, for the first day the *start* is all that is effected; and nearly the whole morning is taken up in getting fairly under weigh. The loose stock had been sent off earlier, for they had been collected and corralled the previous night; and, after a twelve hours' fast, it was necessary they should reach the end of the day's journey betimes. They found the herd grazing in the bottom of the Arkansa, at a point previously fixed upon for their first camp. Here the oxen were unyoked, and the waggons drawn up so as to form the three sides of a small square. The women then descended from their seats, and prepared the evening meal. A huge fire was kindled before the waggons, and round this the whole party collected;

whilst large kettles of coffee boiled on it, and hoe-cakes baked upon the embers.

The women were sadly downhearted, as well they might be, with the dreary prospect before them; and poor Mary, when she saw the Mormon encampment shut out from her sight by the rolling bluffs, and nothing before her but the bleak, barren prairie, could not divest herself of the idea that she had looked for the last time on civilised fellow-creatures, and fairly burst into tears.

In the morning the heavy waggons rolled on again across the upland prairies, to strike the trail used by the traders in passing from the south fork of the Platte to the Arkansa. They had for guide a Canadian voyageur, who had been in the service of the Indian traders, and knew the route well, and who had agreed to pilot them to Fort Lancaster, on the north fork of the Platte. Their course led for about thirty miles up the Boiling Spring River, whence they pursued a north-easterly course to the dividing ridge which separates the waters of the Platte and Arkansa. Their progress was slow, for the ground was saturated with wet, and exceedingly heavy for the cattle, and they scarcely advanced more than ten miles a-day.

At the camp-fire at night, Antoine, the Canadian guide, amused them with tales of the wild life and perilous adventures of the hunters and trappers who make the mountains their home; often extorting a scream from the women by the description of some scene of Indian fight and slaughter, or beguiling them of a commiserating tear by the narrative of the sufferings and privations endured by those hardy hunters in their arduous life.

Mary listened with the greater interest, since she remembered that such was the life which had been led by one very dear to her—by one, long supposed to be dead, of whom she had never but once, since his departure, nearly fifteen years before, heard a syllable. Her imagination pictured him as the bravest and most daring of these adventurous hunters, and conjured up his figure charging through the midst of whooping savages, or stretched on the ground perishing from wounds, or cold, or famine.

Amongst the characters who figured in Antoine's stories, a hunter named La Bonté was made conspicuous for deeds of hardiness and daring. The first mention of the name caused the blood to rush to Mary's face: not that she for a moment imagined it was her La Bonté, for she knew the name was a common one; but, associated with feelings which she had never got the better of, it recalled a sad epoch in her former life, to which she could not look back without mingled pain and pleasure.

Once only, and about two years after his departure, had she ever received tidings of her former lover. A mountaineer had returned from the Far West to settle in his native State, and had found his way to the neighbourhood of old Brand's farm.

Meeting him by accident, Mary, hearing him speak of the mountain hunters, had inquired, tremblingly, after La Bonté. Her informant knew him well—had trapped in company with him—and had heard at the trading fort, whence he had taken his departure for the settlements, that La Bonté had been killed on the Yellow Stone by Blackfeet; which report was confirmed by some Indians of that nation. This was all she had ever learned of the lover of her youth.

Now, upon hearing the name of La Bonté so often mentioned by Antoine, a vague hope was raised in her breast that he was still alive, and she took an opportunity of questioning the Canadian closely on the subject.

"Who was this La Bonté, Antoine, who you say was so brave a mountaineer?" she asked one day.

"J'ne sais pas; he vas un beau garçon, and strong comme le diable—enfant de garce, mais he pas not care a dam for les sauvages, pe gar. He shoot de centare avec his carabine; and ride de cheval comme one Comanche. He trap heap castor, (what you call beevare,) and get plenty dollare—mais he open hand vare wide—and got none too. Den, he hont vid de Blackfoot and avec de Cheyenne, and all round de montaignes he hont dam sight."

"But, Antoine, what became of him at last? and why did he not come home, when he made so many dollars?" asked poor Mary.

"Enfant de garce, mais pourquoi he com home? Pe gar, de montaigne-man, he love de montaigne and de prairie more better dan he love de grandes villes—même de Saint Louis ou de Montreal. Wagh! La Bonté, well, he one montaigne-man, wagh! He love de buffaloe and de chevreaux plus que de bœuf and de mouton, may be. Mais on-dit dat he have autre raison—dat de gal he lofe in Missouri not lofe him, and for dis he not go back. Mais now he go ondare, m' on dit. He vas go to de Californe, may be to steal de hos and de mule—pe gar, and de Espagnols rub him out, and take his hair, so he mort."

"But are you sure of this?" she asked, trembling with grief.

"Ah, now, j'ne suis pas sûr, mais I tink you know dis La Bonté. Enfant de garce, maybe you de gal in Missouri he lofe, and not lofe him. Pe gar! 'fant de garce! fort beau garçon dis La Bonté, pourquoi you ne l'aimez pas? Maybe he not gone ondare. Maybe he turn op, autrefois. De trappares, dey go ondare tree, four, ten times, mais dey turn op twenty time. De sauvage not able for kill La Bonté, ni de dam Espagnols. Ah, non! ne craignez pas; pe gar, he not gone ondare encore."

Spite of the good-natured attempts of the Canadian, poor Mary burst into a flood of tears: not that the information took her unawares, for she long had believed him dead; but because the very mention of his name awoke the strongest feelings within her breast, and taught her how deep was the affection she had felt for him whose loss and violent fate she now bewailed.

As the waggons of the lone caravan roll on towards the Platte, we return to the camp where La Bonté, Killbuck, and the stranger, were sitting before the fire when last we saw them:—Killbuck loquitur:—

"The doins of them Mormon fools can't be beat by Spaniards, stranger. Their mummums and thummums you speak of won't 'shine' whar Injuns are about; nor pint out a trail, whar nothin crossed but rattler-snakes since fust it snow'd on old Pike's Peak. If they pack along them *profits*, as you tell of, who can make it rain hump-ribs and marrow-guts when the crowd gets out of the buffler range, they are 'some,' now, that's a fact. But this child don't believe it. I'd laugh to get a sight on these darned Mormonites, I would. They're 'no account,' I guess; and it's the 'meanest' kind of action to haul their women critters and their young 'uns to sech a starving country as the Californys."

"They are not all Mormons in the crowd," said the strange hunter; "and there's one family amongst them with some smartish boys and girls, I tell you. Their name 's Brand."

La Bonté looked up from the lock of his rifle, which he was cleaning—but either didn't hear, or, hearing, didn't heed, for he continued his work.

"And they are going to part company," continued the stranger, "and put out alone for Platte and the South Pass."

"They'll lose their hair, I'm thinking," said Killbuck, "if the Rapahos are out thar."

"I hope not," continued the other, "for there's a girl amongst them worth more than that."

"Poor beaver!" said La Bonté, looking up from his work. "I'd hate to see any white gal in the hands of Injuns, and of Rapahos worse than all. Where does she come from, stranger?"

"Down below St Louis, from Tennessee, I've heard them say."

"Tennessee," cried La Bonté,—"hurrah for the old State! What's her name, stran——" At this moment Killbuck's old mule pricked her ears and snuffed the air, which action catching La Bonté's eye, he rose abruptly, without waiting a reply to his question, and exclaimed, "The old mule smells Injuns, or I'm a Spaniard!"

The hunter did the old mule justice, and she well maintained her reputation as the best "guard" in the mountains; for in two minutes an Indian stalked into the camp, dressed in a cloth capote, and in odds and ends of civilised attire.

"Rapaho," cried Killbuck, as soon as he saw him; and the Indian catching the word, struck his hand upon his breast, and exclaimed, in broken Spanish and English mixed, "Si, si, me Arapaho, white man amigo. Come to camp—eat heap *carne* —me amigo white man. Come from Pueblo—hunt cibola—me gun break—*no puedo matar nada: mucha hambre* (very hungry),—heap eat."

Killbuck offered his pipe to the Indian, and spoke to him in his own language, which both he and La Bonté well understood. They learned that he was married to a Mexican woman, and lived with some hunters at the Pueblo fort on the Arkansa. He volunteered the information that a war party of his people were out on the Platte trail to intercept the Indian traders on their return from the North Fork; and as some "Mormones" had just started with three waggons in that direction, he said his people would make a "roise." Being muy amigo himself to the whites, he cautioned his present companions from crossing to the "divide," as the "braves," he said, were a "heap" mad, and their hearts were "big," and nothing in the shape of white skin would live before them.

"Wagh!" exclaimed Killbuck, "the Rapahos know me, I'm thinking; and small gain they've made against this child. I've knowed the time when my gun-cover couldn't hold more of their scalps."

The Indian was provided with some powder, of which he stood in need; and, after gorging as much meat as his capacious stomach would hold, he left the camp, and started into the mountain.

The next day our hunters started on their journey down the river, travelling leisurely, and stopping wherever good grass presented itself. One morning they suddenly struck a wheel trail, which left the creek banks and pursued a course at right angles to it, in the direction of the "divide." Killbuck pronounced it but a few hours old, and that of three waggons drawn by oxen.

"Wagh!" he exclaimed, "if them poor devils of Mormonites ain't going head first into the Rapaho trap. They'll be 'gone beaver' afore long."

"Ay," said the strange hunter, "these are the waggons belonging to old Brand, and he has started alone for Laramie. I hope nothing will happen to them."

"Brand!" muttered La Bonté. "I knowed that name mighty well once, years agone; and should hate the worst kind that mischief happened to any one who bore it. This trail's as fresh as paint; and it goes against me to let these simple critters help the Rapahos to their own hair. This child feels like helping 'em out of the scrape. What do you say, old hos?"

"I thinks with you, boy," answered Killbuck, "and go in for following this waggon trail, and telling the poor critters that thar's danger ahead of them. What's your talk, stranger?"

"I go with you," shortly answered the latter; and both followed quickly after La Bonté, who was already trotting smartly on the trail.

Meanwhile the three waggons, containing the household gods of the Brand family, rumbled slowly over the rolling prairie, and towards the upland ridge of the "divide," which, studded with dwarf pine and cedar thicket, rose gradually before them. They travelled with considerable caution, for already the quick eye of Antoine had discovered recent Indian sign upon the trail, and, with mountain quickness, had at once made it out to be that of a war party; for there were no horses with them, and, after one or two of the moccasin tracks, the mark of a rope which trailed upon the ground was sufficient to show him that the Indians were provided with the usual lasso of skin, with which to secure the horses stolen in the expedition. The men of the party were consequently all mounted and thoroughly armed, the waggons moved in a line abreast, and a sharp look-out was kept on all sides. The women and children were all consigned to the interior of the waggons; and the latter had also guns in readiness, to take their part in the defence, should an attack be made.

However, they had seen no Indians, and no fresh sign, for two days after they left the Boiling Spring River, and they began to think they were well out of their neighbourhood. One evening they camped on a creek called Black Horse, and, as usual, had corralled the waggons, and forted as well as circumstances would permit, when three or four Indians suddenly appeared on a bluff at a little distance, and, making signals of peaceable intentions, approached the camp. Most of the men were absent at the time, attending to the cattle or collecting fuel, and only old Brand and one of his young grandchildren, about fourteen years old, remained in camp. The Indians were hospitably received, and regaled with a smoke, after which they began to evince their curiosity by examining every article lying about, and signifying their wishes that it should be given to them. Finding their hints were not taken, they laid hold of several things which took their fancies, and, amongst others, of the pot which was boiling on the fire, and with which one of them was about very coolly to walk off, when old Brand, who up to this moment had retained possession of his temper, seized it out of the Indian's hand, and knocked him down. One of the others instantly began to draw the buckskin cover from his gun, and would no doubt have taken summary vengeance for the insult offered to his companion, when Mary Brand courageously stepped up to him, and, placing her left hand upon the gun which he was in the act of uncovering, with the other pointed a pistol at his breast.

Whether daunted by the bold act of the girl, or admiring her devotion to her father, the Indian drew himself back, exclaimed "Howgh!" and drew the cover again on his piece, went up to old Brand, who all this time looked him sternly in the face, and, shaking him by the hand, motioned at the same time to the others to be peaceable.

The other whites presently coming into camp, the Indians sat quietly down by the fire, and, when the supper was ready, joined in the repast, after which they gathered their buffalo robes about them, and quietly withdrew. Meanwhile Antoine, knowing the treacherous character of the savages, advised that the greatest precaution should be taken to secure the stock; and before dark, therefore, all the mules and horses were hobbled and secured within the corral, the oxen being allowed to feed at liberty —for the Indians scarcely care to trouble themselves with such cattle. A guard was also set round the camp, and relieved every two hours; the fire was extinguished, lest the savages should aim, by its light, at any of the party, and all slept with rifles ready at their sides. However, the night passed quietly, and nothing disturbed the tranquillity of the camp. The prairie wolves loped hungrily around, and their mournful cry was borne upon the wind as they chased deer and antelope on the neighbouring plain; but not a sign of lurking Indians was seen or heard.

In the morning, shortly after sunrise, they were in the act of yoking the oxen to the waggons, and driving in the loose animals which had been turned out to feed at daybreak, when some Indians again appeared upon the bluff, and, descending it, confidently aproached the camp. Antoine strongly advised their not being allowed to enter; but Brand, ignorant of Indian treachery, replied that, so long as they came as friends, they could not be deemed enemies, and allowed no obstruction to be offered to their approach. It was now observed that they were all painted, armed with bows and arrows, and divested of their buffalo robes, appearing naked to the breech-clout, their legs only being protected by deerskin leggings, reaching to the middle of the thigh. Six or seven first arrived, and others quickly followed, dropping in one after the other, until a score or more were collected round the waggons. Their demeanour, at first friendly, soon changed as their numbers increased, and they now became urgent in their demands for powder and lead, and bullying in their manner. A chief accosted Brand, and, through Antoine, informed him "that, unless the demands of his braves were acceded to, he could not be responsible for the consequences; that they were out on the 'war-trail,' and their eyes were red with blood, so that they could not distinguish between white and Yuta scalps; that the party, with all their women and waggons, were in the power of the Indian 'braves,' and therefore the white chief's best plan was to make the best terms he could; that all they required was that they should give up their guns and ammunition 'on the prairie,' and all their mules and horses—retaining the 'medicine' buffaloes (the oxen) to draw their waggons."

By this time the oxen were yoked, and the teamsters, whip in hand, only waited the word to start. Old Brand foamed whilst the Indian stated his demands, but, hearing him to the end, exclaimed, "Darn the red devil! I wouldn't give him a grain of powder to save my life. Put out, boys!" —and, turning to his horse, which stood ready saddled, was about to mount, when the Indians sprang at once upon the waggons, and commenced their attack, yelling like fiends.

One jumped upon old Brand, pulled him back as he was rising in the stirrup, and drew his bow upon him at the same moment. In an instant the old backwoodsman pulled a pistol from his belt, and, putting the muzzle to the Indian's heart, shot him dead. Another Indian, flourishing his war-club, laid the old man at his feet; whilst some dragged the women from the waggons, and others rushed upon the men, who made brave fight in their defence.

Mary, when she saw her father struck to the ground, sprang with a shrill cry to his assistance; for at that moment a savage, frightful as red paint could make him, was standing over his prostrate body, brandishing a glittering knife in the air, preparatory to thrusting it into the old man's breast. For the rest, all was confusion: in vain the small party of whites struggled against overpowering numbers. Their rifles cracked but once, and they were quickly disarmed; whilst the shrieks of the women and children, and the loud yells of the Indians, added to the scene of horror and confusion. As Mary flew to her father's side, an Indian threw his lasso at her, the noose falling over her shoulders, and, jerking it tight, he uttered a delighted yell as the poor girl was thrown back violently to the ground. As she fell, another deliberately shot an arrow at her body, whilst the one who had thrown the lasso rushed forward, his scalp-knife flashing in his hand, to seize the bloody trophy of his savage deed. The girl rose to her knees, and looked wildly towards the spot where her father lay bathed in blood; but the Indian pulled the rope violently, dragged her some yards upon the ground, and then rushed with a yell of vengeance upon his victim. He paused, however, as at that moment a shout as fierce as his own sounded at his very ear; and, looking up, he saw La Bonté gallopping madly down the bluff, his long hair and the fringes of his hunting-shirt and leggins flying in the wind, his right arm supporting his trusty rifle, whilst close behind him came Killbuck and the stranger. Dashing with loud hurrahs to the scene of action, La Bonté, as he charged down the bluff, caught sight of the girl struggling in the hands of the ferocious Indian. Loud was the war-shout of the mountaineer, as he struck his heavy spurs to the rowels in his horse's side, and bounded like lightning to the rescue. In a single stride he was upon the Indian, and, thrusting the muzzle of his rifle into his very breast, he pulled the trigger, driving the savage backward by the blow itself, at the same moment that the bullet passed through his heart, and tumbled him over stone-dead. Throwing down his rifle, La Bonté wheeled his obedient horse, and,

drawing a pistol from his belt, again charged the enemy, among whom Killbuck and the stranger were dealing death-giving blows. Yelling for victory, the mountaineers rushed at the Indians; and they, panic-struck at the sudden attack, and thinking this was but the advanced guard of a large band, fairly turned and fled, leaving five of their number dead upon the field.

Mary, shutting her eyes to the expected death-stroke, heard the loud shout La Bonté gave in charging down the bluff, and, again looking up, saw the wild-looking mountaineer rush to her rescue, and save her from the savage by his timely blow. Her arms were still pinned by the lasso, which prevented her from rising to her feet; and La Bonté was the first to run to aid her, as soon as the fight was fairly over. He jumped from his horse, cut the skin rope which bound her, raised her from the ground, and, upon her turning up her face to thank him, beheld his never-to-be-forgotten Mary Brand; whilst she, hardly believing her senses, recognised in her deliverer her former lover, and still well-beloved La Bonté.

"What, Mary! can it be you?" he asked, looking intently upon the trembling woman.

"La Bonté, you don't forget me!" she answered, and threw herself sobbing into the arms of the sturdy mountaineer.

There we will leave her for the present, and help Killbuck and his companions to examine the killed and wounded. Of the former, five Indians and two whites lay dead, grandchildren of old Brand, fine lads of fourteen or fifteen, who had fought with the greatest bravery, and lay pierced with arrows and lance wounds. Old Brand had received a sore buffet, but a hatful of cold water from the creek sprinkled over his face soon restored him. His sons had not escaped scot-free, and Antoine was shot through the neck, and, falling, had actually been half scalped by an Indian, whom the timely arrival of La Bonté had caused to leave his work unfinished.

Silently, and with sad hearts, the survivors of the family saw the bodies of the two boys buried on the river bank, and the spot marked with a pile of loose stones, procured from the rocky bed of the creek. The carcasses of the treacherous Indians were left to be devoured by wolves, and their bones to bleach in the sun and wind—a warning to their tribe, that such foul treachery as they had meditated had met with a merited retribution.

The next day the party continued their course to the Platte. Antoine and the stranger returned to the Arkansa, starting in the night to avoid the Indians; but Killbuck and La Bonté lent the aid of their rifles to the solitary caravan, and, under their experienced guidance, no more Indian perils were encountered. Mary no longer sat perched up in her father's Conostoga, but rode a quiet mustang by La Bonté's side; and no doubt they found a theme with which to while away the monotonous journey over the dreary plains. South Fork was passed, and Laramie was reached. The Sweet Water mountains, which hang over the "pass" to California, were long since in sight; but when the waters of the North Fork of Platte lay before their horses' feet, and the broad trail was pointed out which led to the great valley of Columbia and their promised land, the heads of the oxen were turned *down* the stream where the shallow waters flow on to join the great Missouri—and not *up*, towards the mountains where they leave their spring-heads, from which springs flow several waters—some coursing their way to the eastward, fertilising, in their route to the Atlantic, the lands of civilised man; others westward, forcing a passage through rocky cañons, and flowing through a barren wilderness, inhabited by fierce and barbarous tribes.

These were the routes to choose from: and, what ever was the cause, the oxen turned their yoked heads away from the rugged mountains; the teamsters joyfully cracked their ponderous whips, as the waggons rolled lightly down the Platte; and men, women, and children, waved their hats and bonnets in the air, and cried out lustily, "Hurrah for home!"

La Bonté looked at the dark sombre mountains ere he turned his back upon them for the last time. He thought of the many years he had spent beneath their rugged shadow, of the many hardships he had suffered, of all his pains and perils in those wild regions. The most exciting episodes of his adventurous career, his tried companions in scenes of fierce fight and bloodshed, passed in review before him. A feeling of regret was creeping over him, when Mary laid her hand gently on his shoulder. One single tear rolled unbidden down his cheek, and he answered her inquiring eyes: "I'm not sorry to leave it, Mary," he said; "but it's hard to turn one's back upon old friends."

They had a hard battle with Killbuck, in endeavouring to persuade him to accompany them to the settlements. The old mountaineer shook his head. "The time," he said "was gone by for that. He had often thought of it, but, when the day arrived, he hadn't heart to leave the mountains. Trapping now was of no account, he knew; but beaver was bound to rise, and then the good times would come again. What could he do in the settlements, where there wasn't room to move, and where it was hard to breathe—there were so many people?"

He accompanied them a considerable distance down the river, ever and anon looking cautiously back, to ascertain that he had not gone out of sight of the mountains. Before reaching the forks, however, he finally bade them adieu; and, turning the head of his old grizzled mule westward, he heartily wrung the hand of his comrade La Bonté; and, crying Yep! to his well-tried animal, disappeared behind a roll of the prairie, and was seen no more

—a thousand good wishes for the welfare of the sturdy trapper speeding him on his solitary way.

Four months from the day when La Bonté so opportunely appeared to rescue Brand's family from the Indians on Black Horse Creek, that worthy and the faithful Mary were duly and lawfully united in the township church of Brandville, Memphis county, State of Tennessee. We cannot say, in the concluding words of nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand novels, that "numerous pledges of mutual love surrounded and cheered them in their declining years," &c. &c.; because it was only on the 24th of July, in the year of our Lord 1847, that La Bonté and Mary Brand were finally made one, after fifteen long years of separation.

The fate of one of the humble characters who have figured in these pages, we must yet tarry a little longer to describe.

During the past winter, a party of mountaineers, flying from overpowering numbers of hostile Sioux, found themselves, one stormy evening, in a wild and dismal cañon near the elevated mountain valley called the "New Park."

The rocky bed of a dry mountain torrent, whose waters were now locked up at their spring-heads by icy fetters, was the only road up which they could make their difficult way: for the rugged sides of the gorge rose precipitously from the creek, scarcely affording a foot-hold to even the active bighorn, which occasionally looked down upon the travellers from the lofty summit. Logs of pine, uprooted by the hurricanes which sweep incessantly through the mountain defiles, and tossed headlong from the surrounding ridges, continually obstructed their way; and huge rocks and boulders, fallen from the heights and blocking up the bed of the stream, added to the difficulty, and threatened them every instant with destruction.

Towards sundown they reached a point where the cañon opened out into a little shelving glade or prairie, a few hundred yards in extent, the entrance to which was almost hidden by a thicket of dwarf pine and cedar. Here they determined to encamp for the night, in a spot secure from Indians, and, as they imagined, untrodden by the foot of man.

What, however, was their astonishment, on breaking through the cedar-covered entrance, to perceive a solitary horse standing motionless in the centre of the prairie. Drawing near, they found it to be an old grizzled mustang, or Indian pony, with cropped ears and ragged tail, (well picked by hungry mules), standing doubled up with cold, and at the very last gasp from extreme old age and weakness. Its bones were nearly through the stiffened skin, the legs of the animal were gathered under it; whilst its forlorn-looking head and stretched-out neck hung listlessly downwards, almost overbalancing its tottering body. The glazed and sunken eye—the protruding and froth-covered tongue—the heaving flank and quivering tail—declared its race was run; and the driving sleet and snow, and penetrating winter blast, scarce made impression upon its callous and worn-out frame.

One of the band of mountaineers was Marcellin, and a single look at the miserable beast was sufficient for him to recognise the once renowned Nez-percé steed of old Bill Williams. That the owner himself was not far distant he felt certain; and, searching carefully around, the hunters presently came upon an old camp, before which lay, protruding from the snow, the blackened remains of pine logs. Before these, which had been the fire, and leaning with his back against a pine trunk, and his legs crossed under him, half covered with snow, reclined the figure of the old mountaineer, his snow-capped head bent over his breast. His well-known hunting-coat of fringed elk-skin hung stiff and weather-stained about him; and his rifle, packs, and traps, were strewed around.

Awe-struck, the trappers approached the body, and found it frozen hard as stone, in which state it had probably lain there for many days or weeks. A jagged rent in the breast of his leather coat, and dark stains about it, showed he [illegible] received a wound before his death; but it was impossible to say, whether to his hurt, or to sickness, or to the natural decay of age, was to be attributed the wretched and solitary end of poor Bill Williams.

A friendly bullet cut short the few remaining hours of the trapper's faithful steed; and burying, as well as they were able, the body of the old mountaineer, the hunters next day left him in his lonely grave, in a spot so wild and remote, that it was doubtful whether even hungry wolves would discover and disinter his attenuated corpse.

THE END.

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